

# **The Territorial Air Force 1925-1957 – Officer Class and Recruitment**

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the University of  
Wolverhampton for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

January 2017

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## **Abstract**

Little has been written about the Territorial Air Force (TAF) as a voluntary military organisation and no sustained analysis of its recruitment and social composition undertaken. Made up of three different parts, the Auxiliary Air Force (AAF), the Special Reserve (SR) and the Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve (RAFVR), these three separate and different groups have not featured significantly in existing literature. Current historiography of the AAF and SR is dominated by the experiences of 600 and 601 Squadrons based in London and presents a popular image of a gentleman's flying club, whilst that of the RAFVR presents an image of a much more egalitarian institution, intended to be a citizens' air force. This thesis presents new and detailed research into the recruitment and social backgrounds of men serving in both the pre and post-war TAF. It seeks to provide an overview of the social composition of all AAF and SR squadrons and offers a case study of 608 (North Riding) Squadron based at Thornaby Aerodrome between 1930 and 1957. Using primary documents from the National Archives (TNA) and recently digitised press records, it explores the recruitment processes, social backgrounds and social relations of personnel in the TAF. Whilst focusing primarily on officers, it looks too at the experience of non-officer recruits. Its findings indicate that the structures and cultures of the AAF and SR squadrons were indeed similar to the well-publicised London squadrons, whilst those for the RAFVR were much more elite than was expected. Military voluntarism continued to play a key role in the defence of twentieth-century Britain, but the underlying tensions and weaknesses associated with a class-based voluntary culture meant that the TAF had to change in response to new pressures. The thesis charts how these changes began to manifest themselves in the post-war world. Class ceased to be the key determining factor in the recruitment of officers as the organisations faced new challenges. Within both the AAF and the RAFVR the pre-war impression of a gentlemen's flying club finally gave way to a more meritocratic culture in the post-war world.

## **Contents**

	<b>PAGE NUMBER</b>
Abstract	<b>2</b>
Acronyms	<b>4</b>
List of Illustrations	<b>5</b>
List of Tables	<b>6-7</b>
Introduction	<b>8-13</b>
Literature Review	<b>13-35</b>
Research Questions	<b>35-42</b>
Methodology	<b>42-49</b>
Chapter 1 – The Creation of the Reserve Forces	<b>50-79</b>
Chapter 2 – The Recruitment Process of the Territorial Air Force 1925-1939	<b>80-105</b>
Chapter 3 – The Social Composition of the Territorial Air Force Prior to 1939	<b>106-168</b>
Chapter 4 – The Reconstitution of the Territorial Air Force 1946-1957	<b>169-228</b>
Chapter 5 – The Social Composition of the Territorial Air Force after 1945	<b>229-284</b>
Conclusion	<b>285-300</b>
Bibliography	<b>301-356</b>

## **Acronyms**

Territorial Air Force	TAF
Auxiliary Air Force	AAF
Special Reserve	SR
Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve	RAFVR
Royal Auxiliary Air Force	RAuxAF
Royal Air Force	RAF
Royal Flying Corps	RFC
The National Archives	TNA
Territorial Army	TA
Royal Naval Air Service	RNAS
Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve	RNVR
University Air Squadron	UAS
Commanding Officer	CO
Non Commissioned Officer	NCO
Aircraftsman Second Class	AC2
Operational Record Book	ORB
Air Member for Personnel Development	AMP
Royal Aero Club	RAeC
Elementary and Reserve Flying Training School	ERFTS
Territorial Force Association	TFA
North Atlantic Treaty Organisation	NATO
Navy Army Air Force Institute	NAAFI
Distinguished Flying Cross	DFC
Distinguished Flying Medal	DFM

## **List of Illustrations**

1. Manning Britain's Radar Defences – Recruiting advertisement October 1951	178
2. Manning Britain's Radar Defences – Recruiting advertisement January 1952	179
3. Join a Fighter Control Unit – Recruiting advertisement April 1950	180
4. Service with the RAF Volunteer Reserve – Recruiting advertisement July 1948	195
5. Spare Time – Recruiting advertisement August 1948	196
6. Air Minded – Recruiting advertisement January 1949	197
7. There's a Place For You in the Part-Time RAF – Recruiting advertisement January 1950	198
8. Managing Directors are Proud to be Mechanics – Recruiting advertisement March 1950	199
9. You Don't Have to Fly to Join – Recruiting advertisement May 1950	200
10. Spend Flying Weekends – Recruiting advertisement June 1950	201
11. Do a Grand Job in Your Spare Time – Recruiting advertisement December 1950	202
12. Help Keep Britain 'On Top' in the Air – Recruiting advertisement January 1951	203
13. There's a Place For You in the Part-Time RAF – Recruiting advertisement January 1951	204
14. There's a Place For You in the Part-Time RAF – Recruiting advertisement June 1952	205
15. There's a Place For You in the Part-Time RAF – Recruiting advertisement September 1952	206
16. Berlin 1943 and Back 1953 – Recruiting advertisement March 1953	207
17. Letter to RAuxAF Squadron Members from Secretary of State for Air – 11 <sup>th</sup> November 1957	225
18. Punch Cartoon – 30 <sup>th</sup> January 1957	226

### **List of Tables**

	Page Number
1. Principles Governing the Special Reserve and The Auxiliary Air Force Squadrons	85
2. To Maintain or Merge the Special Reserve Squadrons	96-97
3. Auxiliary Air Force and Special Reserve Initial Data	110
4. 600 and 601 Squadron Combined Data by Category	120
5. Auxiliary Air Force and Special Reserve Southern Squadrons Showing Percentage of Men with Biographies	130
6. Auxiliary Air Force and Special Reserve Northern Squadrons showing Percentage of Men with Biographies	143
7. Combined Auxiliary Air Force and Special Reserve Data by Category	144
8. Comparison between English, Scottish, Irish and Welsh Auxiliary Air Force and Special Reserve Squadrons with Biographical Details	145
9. English Auxiliary Air Force and Special Reserve Squadrons with Biographical Details by Category	146
10. Scottish Auxiliary Air Force and Special Reserve Squadrons with Biographical Details by Category	147
11. Irish Auxiliary Air Force and Special Reserve Squadrons with Biographical Details by Category	148
12. Welsh Auxiliary Air Force and Special Reserve Squadrons with Biographical Details	148
13. 608 (North Riding) Squadron Auxiliary Air Force Biographical Details by Category	150
14. Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve Initial Data	160
15. Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve Data by Category	163
16. Auxiliary Air Force and Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve actual numbers as a direct comparison by category	164
17. Reconstituted Auxiliary Air Force Squadrons Name, Classification and Location	174
18. Reconstituted Auxiliary Air Force Pilots in Training – Type of Aircraft against Percentage of Pilots	175
19. Name of Individual Auxiliary Air Force Squadron and New Light Anti-Aircraft Regiment Squadron and New Air Defence Unit	177
20. Pre-War Auxiliary Air Force Officers who re-joined the Post-War Royal Auxiliary Air Force	235-236
21. 600 and 601 Squadron Comparison Between Pre and Post-War Initial Data	240
22. 600 and 601 Squadron Comparison Between Pre and Post-War Data by Category	240
23. Royal Auxiliary Air Force Initial Data	256
24. Royal Auxiliary Air Force Data by Category	257
25. Northern Squadrons Showing Percentage of Men with Biographies	259

26. Southern Squadrons Showing Percentage of Men with Biographies	259
27. Comparison Between English Scottish Irish and Welsh Royal Auxiliary Air Force Squadrons with Biographical Details	260
28. English Royal Auxiliary Air Force Squadrons with Biographical Details by Category	261
29. Scottish Royal Auxiliary Air Force Squadrons with Biographical Details by Category	261
30. Irish Royal Auxiliary Air Force Squadrons with Biographical Details by Category	262
31. Welsh Royal Auxiliary Air Force Squadrons with Biographical Details by Category	262
32. Royal Auxiliary Air Force Data for Men With No Squadron Number Given by Category	263
33. Pre-War versus Post-War Recruitment for Case Study Squadron	273
34. Pre-War Versus Post-War Recruitment for Case Study Squadron by Category	273
35. Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve Initial Data	276
36. Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve Data by Category	276
37. Pre-War Versus Post-War Recruiting of the Royal Auxiliary Air Force Year on Year	277
38. Pre-War Versus Post-War Recruiting of the Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve Year on Year	279
39. Post-War Royal Auxiliary Air Force Recruitment Compared to the Post-War Recruitment for the Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve	280
40. Pre-War Auxiliary Air Force Recruiting Versus the Post-War Royal Auxiliary Air Force Recruiting by Squadron	281
41. Royal Auxiliary Air Force Data Versus Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve Data by Category	282

## **Introduction**

In the early 1920s the Royal Air Force (RAF) was in its infancy, created on April 1<sup>st</sup> 1918, whilst its predecessor, the Royal Flying Corps (RFC) had been created in 1912, prior to the First World War in 1914. Flying itself was new and exciting; people would still come out of their houses and gaze to the sky if an engine above was heard. Martin Francis in his book entitled *The Flyer. British Culture and the Royal Air Force 1939-1945* pointed out that “in an age before manned flight became a form of routine mass transportation, flyers enjoyed privileged access to a world of high adventure that was unknown and inconceivable to the overwhelming majority of the population.”<sup>1</sup> As the First World War ended, the “national frame of mind was that of complete revulsion”<sup>2</sup> to what had taken place, and there were no shortage of voices questioning the continued existence of the RAF. In November 1918, the strength of the RAF was nearly 291,000 officers and airmen with 22,647 aircraft.<sup>3</sup> The defence cuts which followed reduced the strength of the RAF by 1920 to 3,280 officers and 25,000 other ranks.<sup>4</sup> Hugh Trenchard, Chief of Air Staff fought to keep the RAF and put forward a paper for “the Permanent Organisation of the RAF” on 11<sup>th</sup> December 1919. Consequently, in the aftermath of the war, when military budgets and numbers

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Martin Francis, *The Flyer. British Culture and the Royal Air Force 1939-1945*, (Oxford, 2008) p1.

2

John Terraine, *The Right of The Line*, (London, 1997), p11.

3

Royal Air Force, *Short History of the Royal Air Force*, Chapter 1, The Early Years of Military Flight, p34. Available at:

<http://www.raf.mod.uk/history/shorthistoryoftheroyalairforce.cfm> Viewed on 6<sup>th</sup> November 2016.

4

Royal Air Force, *Short History of the Royal Air Force*, Chapter 2, The Inter-War Years, p55. Available at:

<http://www.raf.mod.uk/history/shorthistoryoftheroyalairforce.cfm> Viewed on 6<sup>th</sup> November 2016.



were being agreed the idea of a reserve began to be discussed. The manner and factors underlying the way in which this Territorial Air Force (TAF) was recruited and its social make-up are the main focus of this thesis, and since there is little written about this area of the RAF, this thesis will provide an original contribution to knowledge.

The original RAF reserve was made up of two different parts, the Auxiliary Air Force (AAF) and the Special Reserve (SR). Separate and deliberately different, they were created to appeal to young men from across the country who could fly, or who wanted to learn to fly, and men who had a trade, or who wanted to learn a trade. Limitations in the recruitment processes for these two organisations resulted in there being a need for a new and different reserve, the Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve (RAFVR), which came into being in 1936 and began recruiting in 1937. The AAF, which eventually included the SR, (who were merged into them in 1936,) became known as a “gentleman’s flying club” with distinct exclusivity, in fact, Max Aitken, a former member of 601 (County of London) Squadron, a Conservative MP and Chairman of Express Newspapers remembered that:

My companions were a pretty wild and high spirited group many of whom I already knew from skiing and after skiing parties at St Anton. They were the sort of young men who had not quite been expelled from their schools, whom mothers warned their daughters against – in vain – who stayed up far too late at parties. Does that sort of young man still exist? I do not know, but in those days they were quite common and

they clustered in unusual density at the Headquarters of 601 Squadron.<sup>5</sup>

Such were descriptions of the men who volunteered to join the AAF and SR squadrons. In fact Tony Mansell, in his journal article for the RAF Historical Society, believed that:

in all the history of arms, there can seldom have been a body of men more outwardly confident and pleased with themselves than the pilots of the Auxiliary Air Force – amongst them were lawyers and farmers, stockbrokers and journalists, landowners, accountants and play boys. They represented par excellence, that powerful amateur tradition which characterised so much of British life before the war.<sup>6</sup>

Moreover, Mansell further notes that “these amateurs were kindred spirits, young men who had often been educated together in public schools, and who had learned the importance of duty, and camaraderie.”<sup>7</sup> Men who worked in similar environments and who were willing to give up one night a week, each weekend and two weeks in

<sup>5</sup>

Laddie Lucas (ed), *Voices in the Air 1939-1945. Incredible stories of the World War II Airmen in Their Own Words*, (London, 2003) p 36.

<sup>6</sup>

Dr A Mansell, 'Professionals, Amateurs and Private Armies. Pilot Entry Portals in the RAF Expansion of 1934 to 1939' *Proceedings of the RAF Historical Society Number 11*, (1993) pp 55-62.

<sup>7</sup>

Ibid, p57.

the summer for the annual training camp, to serve their country within the TAF, in either the AAF, in squadrons numbered between 600 and 616, or SR squadrons numbered between 500 and 504. From the start it was apparent that “To be an auxiliary, it was essential to be the right person from the right background. The expense of the auxiliary lifestyle saw to that if nothing else did.” Indeed, “the auxiliary officers were what we would call ‘the gentleman type,’ hare and hounds and field sports type. Amateur jockeys and that sort of thing. There was an officer class and an airman class and there was a gulf. It was more pronounced there than anywhere else in the service.”<sup>8</sup>

Consequently, it can be seen that there is an enduring image of the men who joined the TAF, rich young amateurs who volunteered to serve their country’s and fly these new machines in peace and in war. However, World War II led to the development of faster aircraft and the growth of technology which resulted in the need for a different kind of volunteer, a more technically minded and skilled man. A former airman from 608 (North Riding) Squadron believed that:

Before the war most pilots were officers and it didn’t matter whether you had brains or not, you would fly the aircraft. The officers weren’t the brightest by any means, and often it was your family relationship that got you your position. It wasn’t the case after the war, the fittest and the brightest became pilots.<sup>9</sup>

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9 Interview with Mr Albert Guy, Newton Aycliffe, March 6<sup>th</sup> 2004.

This exclusivity meant that during its entire lifetime the AAF was constantly undermanned in terms of both pilots and aircrew. Consequently, during 1935, discussions took place regarding the formation of another voluntary organisation, which was to be called the RAFVR. This reserve, it was decided, would end the shortage of volunteers, because it was to be the 'citizens' air force', having no social or educational barriers to enlistment. This would make it very different to the AAF who believed that their selectiveness was important and could not be compromised when it came to recruiting. Enlisting began for the new reserve in March 1937, with application forms being sent to the Air Ministry, followed by selection boards taking place across the country. Requirements for the RAFVR meant that:

candidates must be between 18 and 25, be physically fit and have had an education up to the standard of the School Certificate, or the Leaving Certificate in Scotland. Previous flying experience is not necessary. Selected candidates will be enlisted as airman pilots with the rank of sergeant; later they will have opportunities of promotion to commissioned rank on merit. The initial period of service will be five years. Training will be given at week-ends and other times, including evenings. Flying training will be given at the aerodromes and ground training at town centres centrally situated.<sup>10</sup>

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Interview with Mr Ted Brown, Boosebeck, November 12<sup>th</sup> 2003.

10

*The Times*, March 13<sup>th</sup> 1937, p9.

Consequently, the recruitment process for young men volunteering for the RAFVR was much more prescribed than that of the AAF and this will be discussed throughout the thesis.

This thesis will focus on a series of research questions which surround the recruitment and social make-up of the TAF. It will highlight the policy and decision making process which led to the formation of the TAF and will consider how successful these organisations became, in terms of their ability to recruit young men. The research findings would expect to show how exclusive the Auxiliaries were, and to prove this by identifying candidates' educational and social backgrounds. In comparison it might be imagined that the candidates who volunteered to join the RAFVR came from lower middle class and working class backgrounds and as such, the research should show that the government did in fact deal with the difficulties of recruiting suitable candidates by creating what they called the citizen's air force. This detailed examination of the backgrounds of officers joining the TAF will explore the extent to which this is so.

### Literature Review

Previous studies of the Royal Air Force (RAF) tend to focus on specific areas within the whole, for example, the history of the organisation, important figures, policy making or technical specifications, whilst making scant references to issues such as social composition, class, voluntarism and the part-time nature of the Territorial Air

Forces (TAF). This literature review will analyse the key texts and debates and will highlight areas where existing historiography is scant.

In the first instance, much of the existing literature on military flight in Britain consists of popular non-academic, traditional, coffee table texts by authors such as Chaz Bowyer<sup>11</sup>, Ray Conyers Nesbit<sup>12</sup> and Michael J F Bowyer<sup>13</sup> who present chronological histories of the RAF. The primary function of such texts is to provide information for the enthusiast and to maintain popular interest in the subject. Other available books present a slightly different perspective within the same vein, by considering the specifications of the various aircraft, or their capabilities, or the individual careers of the men who flew the aircraft; this is done in detail in a number of the books. Similarly, L F E Coombs<sup>14</sup> looks at the way in which Britain developed improvements in flying and aircraft in preparation for World War Two. Again, slightly different are the authors such as Bruce Barrymore Halpenny<sup>15</sup> and David Smith<sup>16</sup> who direct their attention to the range of airfields in different areas of the United Kingdom, and their

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<sup>11</sup>

Chaz Bowyer, *History of the RAF*, (London, 1977).

<sup>12</sup>

Ray Conyers Nesbit, *An Illustrated History of the RAF*. (Surrey, 1990).

<sup>13</sup>

Michael J F Bowyer, *Aircraft for the Few, The RAF's Fighters and Bombers in 1940*, (Yeovil, 1991).

<sup>14</sup>

L F E Coombs, *The Lion has Wings, The Race to Prepare the RAF For World War II 1935-1940*, (Shrewsbury, 1997).

<sup>15</sup>

Bruce Barrymore Halpenny, *Action Stations 4, Military airfields of Yorkshire*, (Cambridge, 1982.).

<sup>16</sup>

David J Smith, *Britain's Military Airfields 1939-1945*, (Yeovil, 1989).

role in the defence of the nation. In a sense none of these books specifically review individual squadrons and their impact on, and relationships with, local communities, nor is there any academic analysis of the social role of the military, either internally or externally. Furthermore the available literature is institutional or operational rather than social or cultural. Alternative genres present biographies of the RAF's founding fathers, such as Hugh Trenchard and Jan Christiaan Smuts, and consider the individual contribution to the organisation as a whole, for example the biography of Trenchard by Andrew Boyle<sup>17</sup> or those who created policy for the RAF. The exception to this is a text by John James entitled *The Paladins. A social history of the RAF up to the outbreak of World War II*.<sup>18</sup> This book looks at areas such as the role of officers and pilots, the role of education and the importance of the actual RAF station itself. He refers to the TAF on a few occasions but the primary topic of research is the RAF itself rather than the Territorial squadrons.

There are a significant number of academic texts on the subject of the RAF, for example, John Terraine<sup>19</sup> in his book *The Right Of The Line: The Royal Air Force in the European War 1939-1945* mentions the Auxiliary Air Force (AAF), one component part of the TAF, the others being the Special Reserves (SR) and the Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve (RAFVR), three times in his major study of the RAF's role in the Second World War noting in the first instance that the AAF was to

<sup>17</sup>

Andrew Boyle, *Trenchard*, (London, 1962).

<sup>18</sup>

John James, *The Paladins. A Social History of the RAF up to the outbreak of World War II*, (London, 1990).

<sup>19</sup>

John Terraine, *The Right of the Line: The Royal Air Force in the European War 1939-1945*, (London 1985).

be “a second line force imitating the Territorial Army” and later on that “even with its reserve and the valued support of the AAF, there would be insufficient personnel should a war occur.” Other literature by Terraine includes *Business in Great Waters : The U Boat Wars, 1916-1945*<sup>20</sup> which does not mention the TAF at all, even though several of the squadrons of reserves played a significant role in hunting down U-boats, whilst in his article in Horst Boog (Ed) *The Conduct of the Air War in the Second World War An International Comparison*<sup>21</sup>, he discusses the pinning of RAF policy on the role of the bomber as the significant factor in preparation for World War II, but, makes no reference to the TAF.

Stephen Roskill<sup>22</sup> discusses the role of the RAF in his three volume work on the war at sea, but whilst he mentions the RAF and Coastal Command, there are only passing references to the TAF and there is no mention of the social history. Raymond H Fredette's *The Sky on Fire*<sup>23</sup>, David Omissi's *Air Power and Colonial*

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<sup>20</sup>

John Terraine, *Business in Great Waters. The U-boat Wars 1916-1945*, (London, 1989).

<sup>21</sup>

Horst Boog (Ed), *Conduct of the Air War in the Second World War. An International Comparison*, (London, 1992).

<sup>22</sup>

Stephen W Roskill, *The War at Sea Volume 1, The Defensive*, (London 1954). *Volume 2 The Offensive*, (London 1960). *Volume 2 Part 2 The Offensive* (London, 1961).

<sup>23</sup>

Raymond Hector Fredette, *The Sky on Fire. The First Battle of Britain 1917-1918*, (London, 1966).



*Control*,<sup>24</sup>, Malcolm Smith's *British Air Policy Between the Wars*,<sup>25</sup> John A Chamier's *The Birth of the Royal Air Force – The Early History and Experiences of the Flying Services*<sup>26</sup>, Maurice Dean's *The Royal Air Force and Two World Wars*<sup>27</sup> and Barry Powers *Strategy Without Slide Rule*<sup>28</sup> are useful in helping to understand the debates surrounding the creation and role of the RAF but contain no reference to the TAF, or deal with the social and class issues. However, Viscount Templewood, Sir Samuel Hoare allocated a chapter in his book *Empire of the Air, The Advent of the Air Age 1922-1929* to the AAF. He discusses how the general public failed to grasp the importance of a non-regular branch to the Royal Air Force and many regular members of the RAF regarded the whole proposal with suspicion. Furthermore Sir Frederick Sykes of the Air Staff, did not believe in part-time flying since military aviation in his view was not only too complicated but was also too dangerous to be undertaken by week-end amateurs.<sup>29</sup> This poor response to Trenchard's White Paper in 1919, reinforces the struggle that took place as the new reserve of the RAF was shelved by the government until 1923.

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<sup>24</sup>

David E Omissi, *Air Power and Colonial Control. The Royal Air Force 1919-1939*, (Manchester, 1960).

<sup>25</sup>

<sup>26</sup> Malcolm Smith, *British Air Strategy Between the Wars*, (Oxford, 1984).

<sup>27</sup> John A Chamier, *The Birth of the Royal Air Force*, (London, 1943).

Maurice Dean, *The Royal Air Force Between Two World Wars*, (London, 1979).

<sup>28</sup>

Barry Powers, *Strategy Without Slide Rule. British Air Strategy 1914-1939*, (London, 1976).

<sup>29</sup>

Viscount Templewood, Sir Samuel Hoare, *Empire of the Air. The Advent of the Air Age 1922-1929*, (London, 1957) pp189-190.

There is very little written about the history of the TAF and therefore, it is useful to consider and evaluate the research into the funding, structure and organisation of the Territorial Army (TA), in books written by Peter Dennis<sup>30</sup> and Hugh Cunningham<sup>31</sup>, and the origin, structure and organisation of the Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve (RNVR) by J Lennox Kerr and Wilfred Granville<sup>32</sup>, Stephen Howarth<sup>33</sup> and Gordon Taylor<sup>34</sup> to identify important parallels between the organisations and to draw out the ideas and framework upon which the TAF was modelled, for example the TA being composed of two different groups of volunteers, the Militia, raised from the civilian population and the yeomanry being raised from small land owners. These comparisons between the TA, the RNVR and the TAF are discussed in more detail in chapter one of the thesis. The only text specifically about the AAF and SR is by Leslie Hunt<sup>35</sup> and is titled *Twenty One Squadrons The History of the Royal Auxiliary Air Force 1925-1957*. He looks at the creation of each individual squadron and chronologically charts its history and role between 1925 and

<sup>30</sup>

Peter Dennis, *The Territorial Army 1906-1940*, (Woodbridge, 1987).

<sup>31</sup>

Hugh Cunningham, *The Volunteer Force. A Social and Political History*, (London, 1975).

<sup>32</sup>

J Lennox Kerr and Wilfred Granville, *The RNVR, A Record of Achievement*, (London, 1957).

<sup>33</sup>

Stephen Howarth, *The Royal Navy's Reserves in War and Peace 1903-2003*, (Barnsley, 2003).

<sup>34</sup>

Gordon Taylor, *London's Navy, A Story of The Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve*, (London, 1983).

<sup>35</sup>

Leslie Hunt, *Twenty One Squadrons – The History of the Royal Auxiliary Air Force*, (London, 1972).

1957. There are also a number of individual squadron histories written by local enthusiasts which document the day to day activities, but do not specifically analyse the social composition nor discuss relationships within the squadron. Thus it is apparent that most of the available military history in this area barely touches on the issues of recruitment and class. This thesis will fill in the obvious gap.

Class relations in British society have always been complex and dynamic and rarely if ever fit comfortably in the broad theoretical models that over time have been developed to help explain them. Moreover, class within a military hierarchy has only been touched upon by some historians, however, it can be used to help us to assess whether the TAF reflected a class system, not simply enforced by the hierarchy of rank but shaped by wider social forces. For example Gerard De Groot in his book *The First World War*, notes that:

enlisted men, drawn from the lowest classes were placed within an institution that reinforced traditional social hierarchies and respect for ones 'betters'. Most of these men knew their place and were not inclined to complain. They did not expect much from life. Their social background made them ideal soldiers to fight in the war.<sup>36</sup>

Furthermore, he goes on to note that "class distinctions were essential to a smooth functioning military. Army life was merely another form of manager-worker

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<sup>36</sup>

relationship.”<sup>37</sup> Finally he notes, “the spit and polish, rigid discipline of the British army worked in part because of the cohesive class structure of Britain and the ingrained respect for authority of the working class.”<sup>38</sup> Thus the hierarchy within which men live and work in the British forces in De Groot’s eyes was dependent upon the class system.

David Cannadine also mentions the military in connection with the class system when he notes, “war is the occupation of the nobility and gentry. Indeed the British officer should be a gentleman first and an officer second.”<sup>39</sup> He goes on to explain “it was not just that a military career needed private wealth. In the navy, it also required the support of what was termed social and family interests. Even in the inter war years, connection still mattered.”<sup>40</sup>

Prior to World War I 50% of the officers in the army were drawn from the landed classes. However, throughout and after the war, there was a marked shortage of young men from the landed gentry and as a result, it was the new elites coming out of the public school system, made up of both landed and bourgeois families that became the new dominant social group within the army. Indeed Cannadine argues

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<sup>37</sup>

Ibid p161.

<sup>38</sup>

Ibid p178.

<sup>39</sup>

David Cannadine, *Aspects of Aristocracy, Grandeur and decline in Modern Britain*, (New Haven, 1994), p187.

<sup>40</sup>

Ibid, p188.

that “in terms of their ethos, their military governors and alumni, the very closest link between the public schools and the armed services was established between 1870 and 1939.”<sup>41</sup> This view is supported by William Rubinstein<sup>42</sup> who argues that there was a merging of the landed and middle class elite between the wars. Gradually the middle class was starting to replace the aristocracy in elite leadership within the army. Ross McKibbin, discussing society as a whole, supports this view when he points out “before World War I society was almost exclusively aristocratic and had a specifically political function. But the middle class increased not only in size, but also more significantly, drastically changed its composition. This took place primarily in the 1930s.”<sup>43</sup>

Indeed De Groot points out “the army mirrored Edwardian society. It had rigid class distinctions and its officers were educated in the same public schools which produced civilian society’s leaders.”<sup>44</sup> He also notes “Britain’s army officers reflected the class divisions of wider British society, the educated middle class officer usually ended up in the artillery or engineers, the two arms that required a high level of technical expertise. The elite classes went into the infantry or more the prestigious

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<sup>41</sup>

Cannadine, *Aspects*, p189.

<sup>42</sup>

W D Rubinstein, *Capitalism, Culture and Decline in Britain, 1750-1990*, (London, 1994) pp102-139.

<sup>43</sup>

Ross McKibbin, *The Ideologies of Class, Social Relations in Britain 1880-1950*, (Oxford 1990) p 72.

<sup>44</sup>

De Groot, *The First World War*, p73.

cavalry. To this group, authority was a birth right and good breeding was thought to be more important than good education.”<sup>45</sup>

There were always insufficient officer recruits to fill the required number for each squadron and Tony Mansell suggests that “a principal reason was the cost of belonging. Annual out of pocket expenses for an officer in one of the TAF squadrons amounted to between £30 and £50, whilst an airman on the ground staff could expect to find £20. In the 1930s you could send your son as a day boy to a Clarendon Nine School for £50 per annum.”<sup>46</sup> Similarly Beckett and Simpson note a private income was also vital. On joining the regiment each subaltern had to provide his own uniform, cases, furniture, mufti servant’s outfit and incoming mess contribution. Thereafter he had to meet the annual mess expenses.....by 1914 the average officer required a private income of between £250 and £400, depending on regiment. Cavalry regiments were much more expensive because officers had to provide at least one charger as well as two hunters and three polo ponies.”<sup>47</sup>

Since there is little written about the TAF, references must be made to the method through which both the Army and the Royal Navy were set up to enable an analysis

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<sup>45</sup>

De Groot, *The First World War*, p74.

<sup>46</sup>

Dr A Mansell, ‘Professionals, Amateurs and Private Armies. Pilot Entry Portals in the RAF Expansion of 1934-1939’, *Proceedings of the RAF Historical Society Number 11*, (1993) p61.

<sup>47</sup>

Ian F W Beckett and Keith Simpson (Eds), *A Nation in Arms. A Social Study of the British Army in The First World War*, (Manchester, 1985) pp138-140.

of the way in which the Air Ministry, Trenchard and significant others built the AAF and SR squadrons, and later the RAFVR. Looking at the first volunteer force in the British army it becomes apparent that similarities exist in the thinking behind the framework. In his book *The Volunteer Force* Hugh Cunningham notes that on “23 June 1860, 21,000 members of the newly formed Volunteer Force congregated in Hyde Park, each man was there of his own free will, and clothed and trained at his own expense.”<sup>48</sup> This strikes a chord when the original AAF and SR squadrons are considered, specifically because a private income was necessary to become an officer in either of the two squadrons. Similarly, “there was a chronic shortage of officers of the right quality.”<sup>49</sup> Further investigation suggests that this was certainly an issue in the AAF and SR squadrons which were significantly under establishment throughout their existence. Cunningham also points out that “it increasingly was the public schools and universities which were seen as the most promising source for officers.”<sup>50</sup> Clearly the RAF took this view, especially with the AAF by establishing University Air Squadrons (UAS) which would train and prepare men to become officers in either the RAF itself or the AAF or SR squadrons.

This Volunteer Force was replaced by Lord Richard Haldane, Secretary of State for War via the Territorial and Reserve Forces Act of 1907<sup>51</sup>. This Act provided for the organisation of His Majesty’s Military Forces and for that purpose to authorise the

<sup>48</sup>

Hugh Cunningham, *The Volunteer Force. A Social and Political History*, (London, 1975) p1.

<sup>49</sup>

Ibid, p3.

<sup>50</sup>

Ibid, p59.

<sup>51</sup>

establishment of County Associations, and the raising and maintenance of a Territorial Force, and for amending the Acts relating to the reserve force. Through this Act, the auxiliary forces of the British army were reformed by transferring existing volunteer and yeomanry units into a new Territorial Force, and disbanding the militia to form a new Special Reserve of the Regular Army. The Act was divided into three sections. The first dealt with the creation of the County Associations which would be set up locally to administer and support the territorial units. The second section reformed the existing volunteers and yeomanry into the newly created Territorial Force, while the third section dissolved the militia and in its place created the Special Reserve composed of men who had not previously served in the army.

Jeremy Crang in his book *The British Army and the People's War*, attempts to discuss "the army as a social institution rather than just looking at the campaigns and battles."<sup>52</sup> He suggests that during World War I, there was a large proportion of British society who were enlisted into the army and as such, the army had close links with British society, but when the war ended and many of the men were demobbed into civilian life, the army became isolated again from British society.<sup>53</sup> He also points out that "The interwar period saw the army as being a deeply conservative social institution which only dimly reflected the modernising influences within British society. Inside the protective womb of the regimental system some officers regarded

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The National Archives (TNA), WO 296/21, Territorial and Reserve Forces Act 1907.

<sup>52</sup>

Jeremy A Crang, *The British Army and the People's War*, (Manchester, 2000) p1.

<sup>53</sup>

Ibid, p1.



the army as a haven from which to escape the social developments of the modern world.”<sup>54</sup> This reinforces the view that after 1918, the armed forces represented in the words of Cannadine<sup>55</sup>, the last bastion of class domination, and the creation of the TA allowed wealthy elites to volunteer for an organisation where they could maintain their power and authority in a way that was increasingly difficult within society as a whole. Indeed, recruitment patterns ensured that only the “gentlemen” would gain officer status.

Crang points out that “during World War One the expansion of the army and the high officer casualty rates ensured that the service was forced to cast its social net wider and deeper.”<sup>56</sup> A situation faced by the RAF in 1936 when they created the RAFVR. Furthermore “the officer corps continued to be drawn between the wars from a narrow segment of society...The army still retained an exclusive upper and upper middle class circle to fill its commissioned ranks characterised almost entirely by those with a public school education.”<sup>57</sup> The system of the old boy network was crucial to the recruitment of officers and ensured that there was a significant shortfall of officers when the Second World War began. The AAF and SR squadrons are a case in point; there was a “fear of allowing the wrong kind of men as future leaders.”<sup>58</sup> Consequently it is clear that recruitment to the rank of officer remained

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<sup>54</sup>

Ibid, p1.

<sup>55</sup>

Cannadine, *Aspects* p187.

<sup>56</sup>

Crang, *The British Army and the People's War*, p21.

<sup>57</sup>

Ibid, p21.

<sup>58</sup>

the same for the TAF. Beckett and Simpson point out that before World War I, the officer class was characterised by social and financial exclusiveness...but that between 1920 and 1930 the percentage of gentlemen declined dramatically whilst the percentage of military professionals rose substantially. The war, they suggest, was responsible for considerably reducing the gentlemanly intake into the officer class which became more middle class.<sup>59</sup> However, it must be remembered that there are significant complexities when analysing class identities, Indeed, Ross McKibbin points out that formal criteria of membership to any given class are lacking,<sup>60</sup> thus blurring the simple definitions of upper, middle and working class used in the past. Whilst David Cannadine points out that when trying to define the “officer class” it was the public school middle class that superseded the country-house patricians as the dominant social class in the army between 1870 and 1939, noting that in the 1870s only 30% of officers had been educated at public school where as by the Boer War in 1903 this figure had risen to 60% and by 1939, on the eve of the Second World War this figure had risen to 80%.<sup>61</sup>

In June 1903 the Naval Forces Act<sup>62</sup> was passed and authorised the Admiralty to “raise and maintain a force to be called the Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve.”<sup>63</sup>

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Ibid, p22.

<sup>59</sup>

Beckett and Simpson, *A Nation in Arms*, p39.

<sup>60</sup>

Ross McKibbin, *Classes and Cultures. England 1918-1951*, (Oxford, 1998).

<sup>61</sup>

Cannadine, *Aspects*, pp83-85.

<sup>62</sup>

*The London Gazette*, 17<sup>th</sup> July 1917.

<sup>63</sup>

Chapter six of the Act says that volunteers should be expected to serve anywhere in time of war. Volunteers joined for a period of three years and undertook to attend drills and conform to the customs of naval service. The RNVR came under the command of the Admiral Superintendent of Coastguards and Reserves. The Act also noted that “officers may present themselves before the Board of Trade Examiners for examinations similar to those granted for Yacht owners.”<sup>64</sup> Officers had to purchase their own uniforms and continued to do so until 1906.<sup>65</sup> Brian Lavery in his book *Hostilities Only: Training the Wartime Royal Navy* looks specifically at officer training and recruitment noting “the narrow base from which officers were recruited.”<sup>66</sup> He goes on to say that “potential officers entered as cadets at the age of about thirteen after a competitive examination, but private means were needed to support a boy at Dartmouth, so entrance was confined to boys from wealthy upper or middle class backgrounds.”<sup>67</sup> Also, “the Special Entry Scheme was set up in 1913 with a much shorter course for boys recruited at about eighteen. They proved successful officers, but, since they nearly all came from the public schools, the social range was not widened.”<sup>68</sup> Clearly status and social position mattered. It is the aim of this thesis to explore the extent to which such attitudes and methods impacted upon the TAF and whether this was intentional.

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<sup>64</sup> Kerr and Granville, *The RNVR, A Record of Achievement*, p52.

<sup>65</sup> Kerr and Granville, *The RNVR, A Record of Achievement*, p54.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid, p55.

<sup>67</sup> Brian Lavery, *Hostilities only. Training the Wartime Royal Navy*, (London, 2004) pp8-9.

<sup>68</sup> Lavery, *Hostilities Only*, p9.

Ibid, p9.

In May 1939 the Military Training Act was passed which introduced peace time conscription. Men were able to choose the RNVR which was newly formed with the purpose of providing a course of training which would appeal to the trainees. The first group of gentlemen yachtsmen, according to Lavery, “came in taxis, on foot, some in limousines driven by liveried chauffeurs. They sported top hats, bowlers, trilbies and golf caps and they wore morning suits, tweeds, grey flannels and shorts,”<sup>69</sup> a comment not unlike those made by John James in his book *The Paladins*<sup>70</sup> which attempts to draw out some of the social history of the RAF.

National Service was brought in from 1<sup>st</sup> January 1949, and so influences post-war recruitment figures for both the Royal Auxiliary Air Force (RAuxAF) and the RAFVR. Richard Vinen, in his history of National Service<sup>71</sup> discusses the impact that it had upon the lives of over 2 million young men who were conscripted into the British armed forces for two years full time service with an additional three and a half years’ service in the reserves including the 430,885 men whose National Service took place with the RAF.<sup>72</sup> He puts forward the view that flying, or maintaining aircraft required technical skill that sometimes cut across the distinction between officers and other

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<sup>69</sup>

Ibid, p149.

<sup>70</sup>

James, *The Paladins*.

<sup>71</sup>

Richard Vinen, *National Service. A Generation in Uniform 1945-1963*, (London, 2015).

<sup>72</sup>

Vinen, *National Service*, p9.

ranks and furthermore, suggests that the other ranks in the air force were better educated than their counterparts in the army. Tom Hickman also covers the subject of National Service in his book “The Call-Up”<sup>73</sup> published in 2004, which is based on several interviews undertaken by the author. He suggests that background and class still could influence a young man’s efforts to do his National Service in the RAF,<sup>74</sup> and this will be followed up in Chapter 4 of this thesis.

Finally, Martin Francis in his book *The Flyer – British Culture and the Royal Air Force 1939-1945* attempts to look at the relationship between members of the RAF and others in British society. He begins by making general comments about how the RAF’s young men were viewed when he notes “the fighter boys and the bomber boys with their glamorous slate blue uniform with a silvery fabric wings sewn above the breast pocket were a colourful counterpart to the drab austerity of the home front.”<sup>75</sup> Furthermore “in an age before manned flight became a form of routine mass transportation, flyers enjoyed a privileged access to the world of high adventure that was unknown and inconceivable to the overwhelming majority of the population.”<sup>76</sup> These are important points because there is a view that the men in the RAF were seen as more glamorous and more heroic compared to the young men in the navy or the army. As Brian Lavery suggests, the RAF certainly had greater appeal than the

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<sup>73</sup>

Tom Hickman, *The Call-Up. A History of National Service*, (London, 2004).

<sup>74</sup>

Ibid, p26.

<sup>75</sup>

Francis, *The Flyer*, p1.

<sup>76</sup>

Francis, *The Flyer*, p1.

army or the navy, but, as time passed, recruiting for both the RAF and the RNVR picked up so the two forces were level pegging by 1940.<sup>77</sup>

Francis puts forward the view that “traditional debates about how Britain became more egalitarian between 1939 and 1945 focussed on the home front, whereas *The Flyer* will consider how the issues of class and democracy played out in the RAF.”<sup>78</sup> He does this by analysing what it was about the RAF men that was so appealing to the civilian population during the war, and considers the various roles that the men of the RAF played, such as those of boyfriends and then husbands and fathers. He then considers the effects of fear on these young men and how they were able to cope throughout the war.

Since the RAF was new, and the junior of the three services, they quickly developed their own culture and ethos adopting an aura of modernity.<sup>79</sup> Recruitment however, was still selective rather than democratic. Senior RAF Commanders “identified good character in terms of the qualities exemplified by the private schools and elite universities...as a consequence, pilot selection proved to be heavily dependent on the possession of the right accent or the familiar stripes of an old school tie...indeed the RAF’s auxiliary squadrons were notorious for their social exclusivity.”<sup>80</sup> This

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<sup>77</sup>

Lavery, *Hostilities only*, p93.

<sup>78</sup>

Francis, *The Flyer*, p5.

<sup>79</sup>

Ibid, p14.

<sup>80</sup>

appearance is visible with the TAF, although the RAFVR which was created in 1936 “opened up the service to lower middle class grammar school boys who were looking for an alternative to dreary clerking jobs in the city.”<sup>81</sup> As such, the RAFVR created to be the most democratic of the three branches of the TAF. The thesis will discuss this at some length, presenting research findings to decide whether or not the RAFVR was in fact the more democratic part of the TAF.

John James, has written a social history of the RAF, and mentions, albeit in passing, the AAF, SR and the RAFVR. For the interwar years he suggests that in Western society the military is divided into two social groups each with its own patterns of socialisation, such as eating and drinking. He goes on to say that the groups are different in terms of the way dominance is exerted and obedience is demanded. They also are different in terms of their military training and daily working tasks. Thus he suggests “when men are needed for tasks requiring the exercise of high military or financial or political responsibilities, or of higher intellectual powers and attainments, they are drawn from the higher deference group. Members of this higher deference group are called officers.”<sup>82</sup>

RAF officers went to Cranwell College to be trained from 1918, and the training cost money. Each potential officer had to have a medical examination and interviews and then the family had to be able to “put down a £150 cash payment on entry, which

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Francis, *The Flyer*, p15.

<sup>81</sup>

Ibid, p15.

<sup>82</sup>

James, *The Paladins*, p135.

was in theory supposed to pay for the uniform and equipment, after that there were fees of £100 a year for two years.”<sup>83</sup> This method of training did not produce enough officers for the available aircraft. This left Trenchard with three options, he could ask for volunteers from regular airmen to train as officers, he could ask the army and navy for volunteers, or his third choice was to appeal to the public. “It was assumed that all applicants would come from the social class which filled the public schools.”<sup>84</sup> “There was no explicit statement here restricting recruiting to one education or social class, simply the bald assumption that only members from that class will apply.”<sup>85</sup> Furthermore, James suggests that the Battle of Britain and World War II were fought by “the upper 10% or fewer of the nation, in terms of income; the pilots were the upper classes, the nobs, the toffs, the rich, the well off, them above, the bosses, put it how you will. As far back as the Roman Republic, it was a privilege of the wealthy to fight for the state in the most interesting and exciting way. The pilots of 1939 came typically from the public schools, the contribution of the masses of the population, of the grammar schools was yet to come...but does it matter who they were, the wealthy or not?...they were the paladins, they were volunteers.”<sup>86</sup> It must be remembered that James is always talking about the volunteers of the RAF, rather than the volunteers of the TAF. Were they the same? This research will focus on this area in some depth.

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<sup>83</sup>

James, *The Paladins*, p131.

<sup>84</sup>

James, *The Paladins*, p143.

<sup>85</sup>

Ibid, p143.

<sup>86</sup>

Ibid, p238.



Jeffrey Hill claims that “voluntary association” has been a British cultural form stretching back to at least the eighteenth century, embracing “all the sectors in which British sports and leisure pursuits are to be found...(and) reaching into the very fabric of social life.”<sup>87</sup> However, the importance of this voluntary tradition in the life of 18<sup>th</sup>C and 19<sup>th</sup>C Britain is often seen as declining in the twentieth society, partly because the state sector was expanding and taking over areas that had been previously been operated on a voluntary basis, partly because economic changes in the structure of the British economy led to the rise of large corporate businesses and the decline of small family firms with their long traditions of voluntary involvement in local communities, partly because social and cultural changes were leading toward a more home-centred, individualised lifestyle and partly because voluntary organisations were often seen as unable to meet the increasingly sophisticated demands of a modern society. Jose Harris, for example, draws a clear distinction between the nineteenth century when “the corporate life of society was seen as expressed through voluntary associations and the local community, from the twentieth century when they were increasingly expressed through the persona of the state.”<sup>88</sup> Salamon suggests that the key reason why voluntary organisations fall and the state steps in is because they often exhibit significant weaknesses such as elitism and amateurism which renders state intervention inevitable.<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>87</sup>

Jeffrey Hill, *Sport, Leisure and Culture in Twentieth Century Britain*, (Basingstoke, 2002) p130.

<sup>88</sup>

Jose Harris, ‘Political Thought and the Welfare State 1870-1914: An Intellectual Framework for British Social Policy,’ *Past and Present*, Volume 135, (1992) p67.

<sup>89</sup>

L M Salamon, ‘Partners in Public Service. The Scope and Theory of Government; Non Profit Relations in W W Powell (Ed), *The Non Profit Sector. A Research Handbook*, (New Haven, 1987), p93.

Whilst there is some evidence to support this view - membership of voluntary organisations such as the Boy Scouts and Girl Guides, or church led youth clubs such as The Boys Brigade for example, all declined between 1913 and 1939, it is hard to see where the TAF fits into such a linear model of social change. Indeed other accounts of the period offer a more complex picture. Both Suzannah Morris<sup>90</sup> and Jane Lewis<sup>91</sup>, for example, stress that Britain developed a mixed economy in the nineteenth century whereby the state, the voluntary sector, the family and the market all played an important role in providing services, and this mixed economy continued to operate throughout the twentieth century. Pat Thane suggests that voluntary organisations may best be conceptualised as part of a range of “buffer institutions”<sup>92</sup> in which the voluntary sector can be described as a ‘moving frontier’<sup>93</sup> where the role of the state sometimes extends and sometimes retracts, depending on specific circumstances. Throughout this ebb and flow, voluntary institutions were an integral part of the social structure of the country. They expressed and reinforced the distribution of power and resources, class and patronage relationships, behavioural norms and community identity. The state’s use of a voluntary organisation like the

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<sup>90</sup>

Suzannah Morris, *Social Policy*, (London,1987) p129.

<sup>91</sup>

Jane Lewis, ‘The Voluntary Sector in the Mixed Economy of Welfare,’ in David Gladstone (Ed) *Before Beveridge. Welfare before the Welfare State*, Choice in Welfare, Number 47 (London, 1999) p4.

<sup>92</sup>

P Thane, ‘Government and Society in England and Wales 1750-1914,’ In F M L Thompson (Ed) *The Cambridge Social History of Britain*, (Cambridge, 1919) p1.

<sup>93</sup>

G Finlayson, ‘A Moving Frontier – Voluntarism and the State In British Social Welfare,’ *Twentieth Century British History*, Volume 1, Number 2 (1990).

TAF in the economic and political climate of the inter-war years offers a good example of how this “buffer model” might operate.

The second key debate relating to the history of voluntarism centres on how it intersects with class. J Hill asks whether “any voluntary association has the capacity to bring a broad social mix under its umbrella,”<sup>94</sup> and this issue is also considered in 1960 by Wilmot and Young who argue that middle class people were far more likely to be members of voluntary associations because of their ability to commit the necessary time and money. They also suggest that since the middle class are more likely to live individualised and home centred lives in the suburbs, the clubs and associations they join form an important social contact outside the work place.<sup>95</sup> Working class collective culture on the other hand is pictured as working through families, extended families, work and neighbourhoods. Stevenson notes that “there was some tendency for the Scouts and the Guides to appeal most strongly to middle class families.”<sup>96</sup> Indeed Ross McKibbin suggests that social exclusion and political partisanship might be the chief functions of many voluntary associations<sup>97</sup> and James Hinton suggests that voluntarism often helps raise class awareness as well as enabling the traditional authority of class to be upheld.<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>94</sup>

Hill, *Sport, Leisure and Culture in Twentieth Century Britain*, p1.

<sup>95</sup>

P Willmott and M Young, *Family and Class in a London Suburb* (London, 1960) p91.

<sup>96</sup>

John Stevenson, *British Society 1914-1945* (London, 1984) p246.

<sup>97</sup>

Ross McKibbin, *The Ideologies of Class, Social Relations in Britain 1880-1950*, (Oxford 1990) p380.

<sup>98</sup>

The degree to which the three reserve forces making up the TAF were inclusive or exclusive will be one of the central themes in this thesis taking into account the fact that within a military hierarchy social mixing was much more complex and of course, based on other factors such as rank. Although particularly the AAF after World War II may have been substantially different in its social make up compared to the pre-war AAF, McKibbin's argument that "social exclusion and political partisanship might be the chief function of many voluntary associations"<sup>99</sup> may prove to hold good in both eras.

Finally, voluntarism is often closely linked with ideals of community and locality. Hill suggests that whilst many voluntary organisations operate in a more national context "the majority are best understood as fulfilling a local purpose."<sup>100</sup> The voluntary military tradition that shaped the TAF was based on the principle of a citizen army formed from local people, operating in their local context, and the relationship between AAF and SR squadrons, and later RAFVR squadrons and their surrounding communities and will form another strand of analysis.

There is little doubt that class played a major role in officer selection for all of the three services, but it is the impact of this issue on the day to day operations of the

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James Hinton, *Women, Social Leadership and the Second World War. Continuities of Class*, (Oxford, 2002) p11.

<sup>99</sup>

McKibbin, *The Ideologies of Class*, p383

<sup>100</sup>

Hill, *Sport, Leisure and Culture in Twentieth Century Britain*, p7.

TAF and the relationships between officers and ordinary airmen which this thesis is more concerned with. As Max Hastings in *Bomber Command* notes, “Harry Jones loved the Royal Air Force. The son of a Birmingham brewery worker, like so many other boys of his generation he had yearned to be a pilot, The day in 1935 that he reported to the recruiting office just short of eighteen years old, this first ambition was brought back to earth with a bump. ‘You have got to be a gentleman to fly, my lad’. So Harry Jones did the next best thing and became a rigger.”<sup>101</sup> Also the way in which the TAF built positive relationships with their local communities which will also play a part. Thirdly it is the way which the Second World War impacted on the structure and recruitment within the TAF, again an area which has not been researched in the past. Finally the idea of voluntarism and the role it played in attracting both officers and airmen to want to give up their free time to join one of these organisations, and comparing the same role with other institutions.

### Research Questions

The Territorial Air Force (TAF) was a voluntary organisation made up of three separate entities whose job it was to provide a reserve supply of officers and airmen who would be trained and immediately able to provide reinforcements for the Royal Air Force (RAF). This thesis will explore and analyse the social composition of the TAF and in doing so, will raise a series of research questions which will be discussed within the thesis. The focus will be on the social composition of the TAF, and will not

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<sup>101</sup>

Max Hastings, *Bomber Command*, (London 1979) p15.

consider technical or institutional areas of the TAF. In this way, the research will provide an original contribution to knowledge. It is important to note here that the TAF is a blanket term used throughout the thesis when discussing the Auxiliary Air Force (AAF), Special Reserve (SR) and Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve (RAFVR). However, there will be times when only the Auxiliaries will be discussed, or only the Volunteer Reserve, so there will be some use of different titles for these part-time volunteers. Consequently when a collective term is needed, it will be Territorial Air Force; otherwise it will be individual sections of the reserves by names. There will be five research questions which will be discussed throughout the thesis.

**The first research question** will analyse the decision taken by the government in the aftermath of the First World War to establish two different forms of voluntary force in 1925, the AAF and the SR. These reserve squadrons were deliberately different and were set up to be in direct competition with each other for recruits. Both were designed to appeal to young men from across the country. It is quite clear that there were similarities and differences between the two organisations which will be explored in Chapter 1. Given the shortcomings of both the AAF and the SR squadrons, the SR was merged into the AAF in 1936. However this still did not overcome the issues that this kind of reserve had, which meant that it was never able to recruit enough young men to take it above the 50% of the required strength. Therefore the decision was taken to set up a different kind of reserve in 1936 which would deal with the recruiting problems faced by the Auxiliaries. The new reserve would operate alongside them and would be called the RAFVR. This of course raises several questions which relate to the decisions made in 1920 when the original reserve was developed, and there will be a detailed examination of

Government and Air Ministry documents, housed at the National Archives, which discuss the thinking behind the new reserve and why two different organisations rather than one were set up in the first place. Having tried to rationalise the decision making of the government at the end of the First World War, consideration is then be given to the re-forming of the RAF reserves at the start of 1946. This is important because the Government fell into the same trap by following the same framework for the reserves as it had followed in the 1920s, resulting in an AAF which had similar problems to its predecessor, and again which was not completely fit for purpose. Similarly, the RAFVR was also re-formed in 1946 in the image of its 1936 counterpart. Why did the Government take these steps and again end up with two different reserve forces? This is one of the key questions which will be explored within the thesis.

**The second research question** will focus on and evaluate the process of recruitment within the AAF, the SR and the RAFVR to discover how young men were recruited and the kinds of recruits who were accepted as pilots and officers within each of the organisations. This will allow analysis of the influence that class structures had upon recruitment. For example, were the requirements for commissions the same for all of the three reserves? And furthermore, were the requirements the same for the pre and post-war TAF? These questions will be considered throughout the thesis and will enable a social analysis of the types of young men to whom the TAF appealed. By identifying all of the officers and presenting their individual biographies, conclusions will be drawn which will enable the thesis to put forward a specific “type” of young men who were interested in becoming officers within the TAF. Was this type of man in the AAF the same as the

man in the RAFVR? Existing literature implies that the men were very different in the two organisations, and that this was exactly what the government wanted when it set up the RAFVR in 1936.

In relation to this second research question, current thinking would imply that class had a major impact on entrants to the Auxiliary and SR squadrons, and less impact on recruits to the RAFVR. The key focus of the research will examine the social composition of each separate force, the AAF, SR and RAFVR. In so much as the AAF and SR squadrons reflected a snapshot of interwar society, so recruitment to the AAF squadrons may well have been down to who you knew and how influential they were and this perhaps suggests why the majority of the very few mentions of the AAF across the current literature tend to liken it to a gentleman's flying club and often this image is based on the flamboyancy and composition of the two London squadrons, 600 (City of London) Squadron and 601 (County of London) Squadron. This is one of the key research questions and is covered in some depth across the thesis. With the establishment of the RAFVR in 1936, different criteria became important when selecting men to become pilots and officers. There will also be significant analysis of the data relating to social composition of all three forces.

**The third research question** asks whether TAF squadrons across the United Kingdom were different according to their region. Were there significant differences between northern and southern squadrons, or those squadrons in Scotland, Ireland and Wales? The major focus of the research has been to identify men who took up commissions within the three different segments of the TAF. Consequently, the



background information of each candidate has been sourced and this allows a detailed analysis of individual squadrons and also squadrons in particular areas of the United Kingdom. This enables the research to make comparisons between squadrons in England, Ireland, Scotland and Wales, as well as those squadrons in the north of England and the south of England. Nevertheless, it should be noted that those men applying to join the AAF joined specific squadrons, and each of these squadrons had a particular location within the United Kingdom, whereas those men volunteering to join the RAFVR joined the organisation, and then could be sent to join any of the RAF squadrons across the country. Therefore, the men of the RAFVR do not have squadron numbers and therefore do not figure in the analysis between north and south, or between England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland, and this must be taken into account when the results are analysed. Finally, the data provided by the research, however limited does shed light upon the differences between those men who volunteered to join squadrons in the different regions of the United Kingdom.

**The fourth research question** will focus on whether and how the new volunteer squadrons integrated with their local communities in both the pre and post-World War eras. This is a significant part of the overall research. Both Auxiliary and SR squadrons were located in industrial areas or cities. There are several ways in which the various squadrons attempted to integrate, formally and informally. Formal interaction between the squadron and the local community took place through squadron open days which were held each year at local aerodromes, where there would be a flying display and the aerodrome would be open for the local people to observe the auxiliary squadron at work. Informal interaction took place through sporting events such as football matches between a squadron team and a local

team, or a tug of war challenge. Moreover, squadron dances also gave the opportunity for informal interaction, as did social contact in local public houses and cinemas. This issue will be considered with the help of local press and individual squadron histories in order to establish their impact and effectiveness. It must be noted that men of the RAFVR were not necessarily allocated to auxiliary squadrons and tended to be posted to regular RAF squadrons, and this has meant that there is no real way of establishing how these young men integrated with their local communities. However, this research question will consider the relationship between the AAF and their local community because, unlike the regular RAF and the RAFVR, the auxiliaries were specifically tied to their local area and as such, were keen to invest in it. The thesis will explore these issues.

**The fifth research question** will examine and analyse why these voluntary organisations were wound up in the late 1950s. The main reason for this is given in some of the literature and involves the rapid changes in aircraft technology compared to the part-time nature of the reserves. In other words, the reserve pilots did not have enough time to train in order to become efficient in these new jet aircraft. Also it is suggested, many of the RAF stations around the country which were run in the main by reserves did not have runways which were of a sufficient length to receive these jets. But, was it the socio-cultural changes taking place in post-war society which made class become less important than it was in the inter-war years, or was it the fact that the new technology meant that qualified and professionally trained men were necessary to both fly and maintain the more modern jet aircraft? This theme will be examined in some detail in the thesis.

To address these questions the thesis will adopt the following structure. Chapter 1 will put forward the reasons why the government chose to set up three different types of reserve force, the AAF, the SR and the RAFVR. It will explore in detail the planning of the reserves from the early 1920s through to the impact of the Second World War, considering existing examples of reserve forces, the Territorial Army (TA) and the Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve (RNVR). Chapter 2 will discuss the recruitment process of the AAF, the SR and the RAFVR. It will focus on the requirements necessary for entrance as pilots of these reserve squadrons and will discuss the merger of the SR squadrons into the AAF in 1936, presenting the arguments for and against the merger. It will also discuss the role of the University Air Squadrons (UAS) in the RAF reserves and will then move on to discuss the formation and recruitment process of the RAFVR in 1936.

Chapter 3 will focus on the social composition of the TAF from the mid-1920s until the onset of war in 1939. It will present the research data and analysis in the form of both tables and bar charts. It will consider the differences between northern and southern squadrons and will also look at the data for England, Ireland, Scotland and Wales. The chapter will also include a short case study of 608 (North Riding) Squadron which will provide a more detailed analysis of whether or not more localised AAF squadrons were made up of young men from similar backgrounds as those from the more well-known London based squadrons, 600 (City of London) Squadron and 601 (County of London) Squadron. The full set of individual biographies can be found in Appendix one. The key focus of this chapter will be the

social backgrounds of the young men recruited to join the AAF and RAFVR prior to the Second World War, specifically the role of class and its importance in officer recruitment for the RAF reserves.

The emphasis of Chapter 4 is on the reconstitution of the TAF which began following the conclusion of the war in 1945. It will look at the decisions made supported by primary source material, such as documents and letters from the Air Ministry, from the National Archive. It will also discuss National Service which ran throughout a significant part of the post-war period and had a major impact on recruitment for both the RAuxAF and the RAFVR. Examples of recruitment posters from the 1950s will be given to reinforce one of the ways in which the government and Air Ministry attempted to increase recruiting to both the RAuxAF and the RAFVR. Finally this chapter will consider the reasons for the disbandment of the Royal Auxiliary Air Force (RAuxAF) squadrons in 1957. Chapter 5 will concentrate on the social composition of the TAF in the years after the end of the Second World War. In a similar way to chapter 3, data will be presented which will be used to identify whether or not there was a significant change in the types of men who volunteered and were successfully recruited into the TAF. The chapter will try to identify differences between those men in the pre-war squadron and those in the post-war squadrons. There will also be a case study of 608 (North Riding) Squadron to compare its social make-up in comparison to those of the two key London squadrons. The full set of individual biographies can be found in Appendix Two. Finally conclusions will be drawn which will bring together common threads enabling deductions to be made about the social composition of the TAF as a whole in the period 1930-1957.

## **Methodology**

The thesis has used several different sources to undertake the research. In the first instance, the National Archives (TNA) hold most of the surviving Air Ministry records covering the pre-war and war time period which can be found in Air Historical Branch Records: Series 1. This consists of: “papers mostly dated 1914-1918 received by the Air Historical branch from Air Ministry Departments from formations of the Royal Flying Corps (RFC) and Royal Air Force (RAF) and various other sources for use in the official history of the Air Ministry, squadron histories and operation narratives.”<sup>102</sup> Other documents held at the National Archives are government papers relating to the creation and establishment of the Auxiliary Air Force (AAF), Special Reserve (SR) and Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve (RAFVR), the procedures followed, the rules that were put in place and the funding that was decided upon. These can be found in the Correspondence of the Air Ministry relating to aviation and aeronautics.

There are also Operational Record Books (ORB) for each of the individual AAF and SR squadrons. These books list in chronological order, the activities of both the squadron and the RAF station on a daily basis in many cases showing the personnel in each squadron or station at any given time. They note other activities that took place on each day including some social events, records of illness and flying

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TNA, AIR1, Air Ministry, Air Historical Branch: Papers, Series1, [discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/](https://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/) Viewed 23<sup>rd</sup> October 2016.

incidents. Record books in this series, the National Archives guide points out, “provide a daily record of events in each squadron entered on Form 540 with appendices. The object of the operational record book (ORB) was to furnish a complete historical record of a unit from the time of its formation, including an accurate record of operations carried out.”<sup>103</sup> The ORB’s provide some of the basic factual bricks upon which the thesis is built. These documents are largely factual presenting the government policies of the time, although they are open to interpretation when cross referenced with the established historiography relating to the formation of the Air Services from 1912-1918. The debates around the construction of the Air Force Reserves can also be found within these documents.

There are also a number of documents held in the archives of the Imperial War Museum. These consist of private papers donated to the museum by members of the armed forces, including flight log books and diaries. Many of these relate to the period of the Second World War. The archive also holds some duplicate ORB’s in the collection. Other documents such as letters and diaries can be found at the RAF Museum at Hendon which also holds private papers from individual members of some AAF squadrons. Initial research in these archives however suggested that they would be of little use to this study as they are in the main, related to the RAF rather than the TAF.

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103

TNA, AIR27, Air Ministry, Series details: Air Ministry and Successors: Operations Record Books, Squadrons, 1911-1972 [www.nationalarchives.gov.uk](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk).

The local press have played a significant role in contextualising the growth and development of the TAF in relation to regional events; one of the key factors in choosing the location of Auxiliary squadrons was that recruitment was to focus on local personnel; their purpose was to build strong links and bonds with the local community. Newspapers from each local area have recorded events that took place including open days, squadron dances and sporting events.

Press records across the country have been used to identify the social backgrounds of UK volunteers to the TAF. Contacts have been made with AAF and SR squadron associations and this has provided additional information about individuals and squadron activities. The recent digitisation of several major press records, most notably *The Times Digital Archive*, offering a complete two hundred year run of the paper from its inception in 1785 to 1985, has enabled thorough searches of local squadrons and their volunteers. Digitisation of the *London Gazette* has also enabled the identification of men commissioned into the AAF and SR squadrons and also any promotions and bravery awards which were made across the United Kingdom. As part of this section of the thesis, a table, made up of the names of each AAF and SR squadron across the whole of the United Kingdom has been completed giving the name of each officer, the date he was commissioned and then any extra background information that can be found. This information was located by searching through the *London Gazette* Archive squadron by squadron to identify each new officer. *The Times Digital Archive* was then used to piece together any background information that was found which would help to make a pen portrait of each individual officer and which would then enable the research to draw conclusions about the backgrounds of the officers across the UK overall between 1924 and 1945.

Ten general categories were selected by the author as representing the activities of a young man from a specifically high or middle class group. The categories selected were, public school. Was the young man educated in one of the countries public schools? For example, Eton, Westminster or Harrow. Attending one of these schools reflects the financial background from which a young man comes, since the termly fees were beyond the reach of ordinary working class families.

The second category was attending Oxford or Cambridge University. Again this category highlights the names of young men whose parents could afford to pay for them to study, rather than immediately taking up a job or an apprenticeship. Indeed, Dyhouse points out in 2006 that "Studies of Oxbridge make it clear that these institutions catered for a social elite. Students from working class homes were very much outnumbered by those who might be seen as having regarded college life as something in the nature of a 'finishing school for young gentlemen.'"<sup>104</sup> The third category was attending any other university. This too reflects the financial backgrounds of the young man's family, as this was a time where education cost money, although scholarships were available to those who excelled in particular subjects. "In the mid to late 1930s university tuition fees averaged around £40 per annum. This was considerably less than the cost of studying at a college in Oxford or Cambridge, where the fees were estimated at between £200 and £275 for a man."<sup>105</sup>

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<sup>104</sup>

Carol Dyhouse, *Students: A Gendered History*, (London, 2006) p5.

<sup>105</sup>

Ibid, p5.



These figures need to be put into context by considering that the average annual income for a working class man was around £208, therefore attendance at an Oxbridge University, and even a university in general, was beyond the reach of most working class families.

The next category chosen was elite sport. By this the research identified any young men who took part in sports which were specifically linked to those of a high social class or those with money. For example, rowing, shooting, hunting, fencing, cricket and yachting. Taking part in these activities reflected a man's social status. The next three categories were chosen because they record significant events in a person's life, and to have these events marked by an announcement in *the Times* again shows status. The events chosen were birth announcements, that is for a young man to mark the birth of one or all of his children with an announcement in the paper, marriage, that is for the young man or a member of his family to mark his engagement or marriage through an announcement in the newspaper and finally a death announcement or obituary, which involved another person in the family using the paper to announce the death of the young man and then reflected upon his life. The next two categories chosen represented the chosen career of the young man. Options given were either the profession that the young man worked in, such as law, medicine or accountancy. Business, for example, insurance, banking and finance in the City of London, or Industry, such as engineering, Or, did the young man work for his family's business. This shows that the business was prepared to support the young man in the time off he needed to be a member of a part-time squadron. Finally, the last category was whether or not the young man had been a member of a University Air Squadron (UAS).

These ten categories were measured and used to suggest the social status of a young officer recruit, based largely on the cost and the status of *The Times* newspaper. Moreover, these categories could in fact be used to measure status across the civilian population during this period too. A Google search of the man's full name was also undertaken which threw up individual squadron web pages as well as the Commonwealth Graves Commission and the research of other individuals. Finally squadron histories were also used to try to find out biographical information about all of the men who had been identified. This method of identifying men and then discovering their background was used across the AAF and the RAFVR. In this way, the research findings were measurable and were also accurate. This can be shown when the tables are studied which appear in chapter 3 and chapter 5. All of the individual officer's biographical information can be found in appendix one and two. Post 1946, the AAF was reformed and went on to be on operational duties until it was disbanded in 1957. Here too the *London Gazette* and the *Times Digital Archive* have been used to assess those officers who re-joined after the war was over, and to help ascertain the backgrounds of the officers who signed up for the reserves during that time.

It was much more difficult to build up pictures of individual officers for the RAFVR. With the AAF, all newly commissioned men were allocated to their local squadron, and all squadrons were numbered between 600 and 616, with the SR all newly commissioned men were allocated to their local squadron and all squadrons were numbered between 500 and 504. These individual squadrons have proved to be

much simpler to research whereas the RAFVR officers were commissioned and then sent to any of the RAF squadrons. To identify RAFVR officers, the search engine of the *London Gazette* was used focusing on the term "RAFVR." This produced a massive number of names and these names were listed in the first instance, then put into alphabetical order and then cross referenced against the *Times Digital Archive*. The final piece therefore, provides a comprehensive list of all officers across the TAF.

It should be noted that whilst it has proved difficult to research the backgrounds of the AAF and SR officers, it has been virtually impossible to trace the backgrounds of the airmen and ground crews. Digital archives tend to present biographical information of those from more privileged backgrounds, thus officers have been easier to trace. Since the officers were primarily pilots, their activities were also recorded in squadron ORBs. The airmen and ground crew do not focus in either of these sources and therefore the thesis has focused primarily on the backgrounds of AAF, SR and RAFVR officers across the United Kingdom.

In conclusion, the research undertaken to form the basis of this thesis is new and original. The focus on recruitment and class is an innovative angle upon which to draw conclusions about the way in which the TAF was brought into being, and the way in which recruitment relied so heavily upon social class in the pre-war world, whilst relying upon technical skills and knowledge in the post-war world. The research provides a mirror to reflect upon the changes taking place in society in the United Kingdom during the period 1925-1957 and will provide an important

contribution to knowledge with regard to the role played by both recruitment and social class within a military institution.

## **Chapter 1**

### **The Creation of the Reserve Forces**

This first chapter will provide an analysis of the decisions made by the government to follow the ideas of Hugh Trenchard and form a Territorial Air Force (TAF). It will discuss the models of the Territorial Army (TA) and the Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve (RNVR), and using primary source documents from the National Archives it

will analyse the reasoning as to why those at the Air Ministry did not do what the other two branches of the armed forces did, which was to set up one single reserve, and set up two initial types of reserve, the Auxiliary Air Force (AAF) and the Special Reserve (SR). It will then move on to consider why in 1936, a second type of reserve, the Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve (RAFVR), was set up. This chapter therefore will form the answer to the first research question. Existing literature says that the AAF was in direct competition with the SR squadrons and therefore each would appeal to different recruits and as such, there would be similar numbers of recruits in both, based almost entirely upon whether a man could fly or not. This would be the determining factor for officer recruits within the separate organisations. With the introduction of the RAFVR in 1936, it is currently claimed that the volunteers for this organisation were from somewhat different backgrounds from those for the AAF and SR and in this respect, the government of the day had formed a more trans-class reserve which would appeal to many more young men. This chapter will critically analyse these current interpretations.

The future defence policy of Britain was influenced by the first flight across the English Channel on 25<sup>th</sup> July 1909 by the Frenchman, Louis Bleriot. For centuries Britain had considered itself to have been safe from a land attack because of its island status. For protection, it had only needed a small standing army and a navy.<sup>106</sup> Therefore, the implications of Bleriot's flight were enormous both for aviation and for Britain. Britain's island status was no longer such a factor in itself to prevent it from attack.<sup>107</sup>

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Paul Kennedy, *The Realities Behind Diplomacy. Background influences on British External Policy 1865-1980*, (London, 1981) p 274.

<sup>107</sup>

The Government's, military and naval chiefs' suspicion and concern about the development of aviation<sup>108</sup> meant that Britain fell behind other countries in terms of expenditure on aeronautical development. In April 1909, Britain had spent a mere £5000, compared to France's £47,000 and Germany's £400,000.<sup>109</sup> This lack of financial commitment to the research and development of aviation was a reflection of the views of the majority of the British Government and military at the time.

The first major move towards the recognition of the possible role of aviation in future defence policy came from the army in February 1911 when it organised an Air Battalion of the Royal Engineers. In the same year, the Navy allowed four naval officers to learn to fly. The Admiralty bought two aeroplanes and set up a small naval flying school at Eastchurch.<sup>110</sup> Furthermore, at the end of the year, the Prime Minister, Asquith, appointed a Sub-Committee of Imperial Defence, chaired by Lord Haldane, whose role it was to decide what measures would be needed to ensure that Britain developed an "an efficient aerial service."<sup>111</sup> The sub-committee's membership included proponents of an aviation corps, Colonel David Henderson and Captain Frederick H Sykes, men with army careers and backgrounds, who could

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Sir Maurice Dean, *The Royal Air Force and Two World Wars*, (London, 1979) p 11.

<sup>108</sup>

<sup>109</sup> J A Chamier, *The Birth of the Royal Air Force*, (London, 1943) p92.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid, p 93.

<sup>111</sup> Michael Armitage, *The Royal Air Force – An Illustrated History*, (London, 1993) p37.

Maurice Dean, *The Royal Air Force and Two World Wars*, (London, 1979) p7.

both fly.<sup>112</sup> The sub-committee recommended an aeronautical service comprising the Royal Flying Corps (RFC), with a Naval wing and a Central Flying School. The RFC was constituted by Royal Warrant on 13<sup>th</sup> April 1912 and was controlled by the Army Council and commanded by Captain Sykes.<sup>113</sup> Given the Admiralty's resistance to inter-service links, the RFC was forced to cede the Naval wing, which was renamed the Royal Naval Air Service (RNAS) on July 1<sup>st</sup> 1914.<sup>114</sup>

Candidates for the RFC had first to qualify for the Royal Aero Club (RAeC) Pilot Certificate by taking a civilian flying course at their own expense. The RAeC had been created in 1901 and was itself very influential in the growth of aviation in Britain. It was responsible for the training of most military pilots up to 1915 when military schools took over the job. The Club controlled all private and sporting flying in the United Kingdom and regulated flying records and competitions. By the end of World War One, more than 6,300 military pilots had taken the RAeC Aviator Certificates, and a new Light Aeroplane Club scheme was formed ensuring that between 1925 and 1939 about 60 Flying Clubs were started, training over 5,000 pilots, supporting the aircraft industry and providing a nucleus of Royal Air Force (RAF), AAF and RAFVR pilots for the Second World War. In many ways the voluntaristic mentality of the RAeC was to influence the government and military

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<sup>112</sup>

Michael Armitage, *The Royal Air Force – An Illustrated History*, (London, 1993) p37.

<sup>113</sup>

Stephen E Koss, *Lord Haldane: Scapegoat for Liberalism*, (New York, 1969) p 103.

<sup>114</sup>

Chaz Bowyer, *History of the RAF*, (London, 1977) p 21.

thinking between the wars because the club actually prevented the development of a larger professional air service due to its control over civilian flying.<sup>115</sup>

It has been argued that the Royal Navy were quicker to accept the potential of aviation, preparing their pilots for a more offensive role so that by 1913, the RNAS pilots were learning the skill of bomb dropping, whilst the army continued to develop the role of reconnaissance. This acceptance by the Royal Navy of the potential of aviation echoed the technocratic nature of their service and reinforces the view that the Navy was more likely to see the possibilities of aircraft than the Army since the latter had undergone very little technological change over the centuries.<sup>116</sup> However, Andrew Whitmarsh argues that “neither the British army nor many of its senior officers were really so dismissive of military aviation before 1914. In many cases, aircraft were officially incorporated into manoeuvres and other training exercises, an indication that the army recognised their potential value and wanted to experiment with their use in the field.”<sup>117</sup>

World War One proved to be the testing ground for the creation of the modern RAF. It allowed for the expansion of the RFC and highlighted the crucial role that aircraft could play in future conflicts. As the war progressed, the British Government entered

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<sup>115</sup>

Tony Newton, *Pins and Needles and Paperclips: Treasures from the Royal Aero Club Archives*, (London, 2006) p 17.

<sup>116</sup>

Gerald J De Groot, *The First World War*, (Basingstoke, 2001) p98.

<sup>117</sup>

Andrew Whitmarsh, ‘British Army Manoeuvres and the Development of Military Aviation 1910-1913’, in *War in History*, Volume 14 Issue 3, July 2007, p326.



into discussions to decide the future of aviation within the military and in June 1917, a Cabinet Committee was formed, chaired by General Jan Christian Smuts, Minister of Defence of South Africa and a member of the War Cabinet. As he was not British, he was detached from the inter-service rivalry that existed between the Army and the Royal Navy and also in many ways, from the influence of Government. The first report of the Committee was issued on 19<sup>th</sup> July 1917 and recommended that a single command be established for all fighter aircraft, anti-aircraft and search batteries and all observation posts. The second report, issued on 17<sup>th</sup> August 1917, was even more far reaching, arguing for the creation of a separate Air Ministry and Air Staff to amalgamate the RFC and the RNAS into a new Air Service that was independent of the Army and the Navy. Smuts believed that aerial operations would in fact supersede the operations of the Navy and Army given their potential to devastate enemy territory, centres of industry and cities. <sup>118</sup>

Subsequently, both the Army and the Navy opposed the report because each saw this proposed new force as a threat to their funding; however Parliament passed The Air Force (Constitution) Act on November 29 1917. The RNAS and the RFC were merged on 1st April 1918 and on that day, a new third service, The Royal Air Force was created. By the end of the war, the RAF possessed more than twenty two thousand aircraft making it the world's largest air force. <sup>119</sup>

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Jan Christian Smuts, *J C Smuts*, (London, 1952) p 107.

<sup>119</sup>

John D R Rawlings, *The History of the Royal Air Force*, (Feltham, 1984) p 52.

The infant Royal Air Force then had to learn to compete for resources with the older military and naval services with their established lobbyists and elite supporters. The new organisation had to battle against historically preconceived and long established ideas and protocol, and fight many attempts by the Army and Navy to claim back their own aviation units. All of this was conducted in a climate of severe and continuous financial restraint. In 1919, at the request of the Treasury, the “Ten Year Rule” was introduced, a rolling programme which involved a planning assumption that presupposed that there would be no major war involving Britain for ten years. It allowed the Government to reduce spending on armaments in line with post-war public opinion. Indeed, the new Auxiliary Air Force became a function of the Ten Year Rule as its creation enabled the Government to spend less on armaments whilst still hoping to maintain an adequate military presence in both Britain and the Empire through the use of volunteers. The British Government failed to take seriously the growing evidence of German rearmament and militancy during the 1930s and underestimated the threat that Germany posed to Britain and indeed Europe.<sup>120</sup> Therefore the armed air services faced a difficult environment for much of the interwar period which influenced the shape that the service took and in particular its increasing dependence on voluntary support.

In November 1919, Winston Churchill was appointed to the post of Secretary of State for War and Air. He invited Hugh Trenchard to accept the post of Chief of the Air Staff. Aware that war and therefore grandiose plans for air defence in Britain would be unacceptable, Trenchard produced a White Paper called “An Outline of the

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G C Peden, *British Rearmament and the Treasury 1932-1939*, (Edinburgh, 1979) p 38.

Scheme for the Permanent Organisation of the Royal Air Force” in December 1919<sup>121</sup>. He saw the potential of the RAF to “police” the British Empire, so reducing the cost of staffing large garrisons overseas and therefore reducing military expenditure as a whole.<sup>122</sup> Furthermore, the suggestion of an air force reserve initially included in the 1917 Act addressed the problem that to fund a full time air force would be a costly exercise and may not fit with the interwar public’s desire for disarmament.

The creation and organisation of the RAF reserve forces during the interwar period was based upon the recruitment process and structure of the army.<sup>123</sup> This meant that the initial process of being nominated for a commission was linked to social and political influence rather than intellectual, military or technical ability. Reforms directed by Edward Cardwell, Secretary of State for War on 1<sup>st</sup> November 1871, removed the purchase of commissions whereby officers were drawn from the aristocracy and landed gentry and sought to streamline the recruitment process. Cardwell’s reforms meant that recruiting for regiments took place locally and this model for the army became the framework upon which the AAF was built, linking the locality to the squadron.<sup>124</sup> Furthermore, the AAF came to resemble the

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The National Archives (TNA), Chief of the Air Staff, *Permanent Organization of the Royal Air Force and Note by the Secretary of State for Air*, (London, 1919).

<sup>122</sup>

Armitage, *The Royal Air Force*, p33. Also in Paul Kennedy, *Realities Behind Diplomacy. Background Influences on British External Policy 1865 –1980* (London, 1981), p274.

<sup>123</sup>

Peter Dennis, *The Territorial Army 1906-1940*, (Suffolk, 1987) p3.

<sup>124</sup>

Hugh Cunningham, *The Volunteer Force*, (London, 1975) pp104-109.

entrepreneurial private forces of the pre-Cardwell period. The AAF relied upon its pilots holding a pilot's licence, which meant that they had to come from wealthier backgrounds since flying was new and expensive. The AAF was inevitably the product of the time, shaped in part by a pre-war ambiguity about the value of the air services *per se*, but also shaped by older military traditions such as the yeomanry, pre-Cardwell commissions and regimental systems; it also developed its own distinctive culture. The selection process that operated in the AAF, based as it was on the availability of time, money and connections, was undeniably elitist and can be contrasted with government and public service recruitment which increasingly bore the imprint of a more democratic and accessible culture or indeed the regular RAF and Territorial Army (TA) which were also more democratic organisations in terms of the men who served in them.

The TA had been in existence for many years before the idea of the TAF came into being and was used as a model for the new voluntary air service. Since 1794, the Army had used two groups of volunteers, the Militia, raised from the civilian population and the Yeomanry or cavalry, recruited from men holding small landed estates or freeholds. These volunteers trained on a part-time basis, but could be embodied for full-time service when there was a risk of invasion or indeed in some colonial conflicts like the Boer War.<sup>125</sup> Clearly the army could not retain in peacetime all the soldiers it needed to meet the needs of war, and reservists helped it to make the transition. They also formed part of a bridge linking the army to wider society and, given the traditional ambivalence of British civilians towards soldiers and

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<sup>125</sup>

Richard Price, *An Imperial War and the British Working Class. Attitudes and Reactions to the Boer War 1899-1902* (Toronto, 1972). p103.

standing armies, especially as the army's visibility across the nation was diminishing, this role was of pivotal importance.<sup>126</sup>

Richard Burdon Haldane, Secretary for War in 1908, was the founder of the TA, which was seen to be a volunteer force locally organized to provide a reserve of trained and disciplined manpower for use in an emergency, but which were not dependent on local patronage. Peter Dennis notes that the volunteers had originally been established as a "private and exclusive military club, membership of which entailed the payment of entrance and annual fees."<sup>127</sup> Haldane, on the other hand, had a different vision of the TA seeing it administered locally and hence he decided that funding would be undertaken by the County Territorial Associations, a body whose duty it was to recruit and organise the service.<sup>128</sup> In 1907 joint associations were created, made up of TA and AAF members. Though possibly not typical, detailed records are available for Glasgow and they can provide an example of how a County Joint Association might be composed. The Lord Lieutenant was President of the Association which, in this case, had a further 51 ordinary members. 24 (slightly less than half) were military members (i.e. the Army); 3 were AAF members; 8 were representative members, and 16 co-opted members with a chairman and vice-chairman elected from the membership. The military members were appointed by the Army Council from amongst the officers of the local TA along with the officers of the former Yeomanry and Volunteer Forces in the locality. Similarly the Air Force

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<sup>126</sup>

Cunningham, *Volunteer Force*, pp103-109.

<sup>127</sup>

Peter Dennis, *The Territorial Army 1906-1940*, (Suffolk, 1987) p3.

<sup>128</sup>

Koss, *Lord Haldane*, p104.

members were drawn from serving and former-serving officers in the AAF or in the regular RAF. The representative members reflected corporate interests of the City with 7 recommended by the Corporation of the City of Glasgow and 1 by the governing body of the University of Glasgow. The co-opted members allowed the Association to draw in a range of other interests including not less than three representatives of the employers and not less than three representatives of the workmen, and “as far as possible person’s representative of the interests of the employers and workmen in the aircraft industry in the county.”<sup>129</sup> This Association provided a forum for both the local elite and the Army elite to wield power and have a say in the military organisation of the county. There was a distribution of interests between the military and local employers and employees and the aim was to provide a framework for representation within the Association. This was reflected in all of the County Associations across the country.

Sir Hugh Trenchard wanted to create an air force reserve that would be raised on a territorial basis and which would allow for the skills and expertise that had been developed within the RFC to be preserved, thus allowing for future expansion when the political climate was more propitious. In July 1920, a confidential document originating from the Air Ministry entitled, “Territorial Air Force”, proposed a scheme in which a new organisation would be created. The TAF would take over the responsibility for the aerial defence of the United Kingdom; furthermore, should a war begin, the TAF would be able to reinforce the RAF.<sup>130</sup> Consequently, it is clear that

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<sup>129</sup>

TNA, Air 2/253, Associations of the Auxiliary Air Force, “Territorial Army and Auxiliary Air Force Joint Association for the City of Glasgow,” 25<sup>th</sup> July 1924, pp1-6, Sections 1-25

<sup>130</sup>

Trenchard saw the TAF as an alternative to increased military spending on the RAF, which would enable him to gain support for his air reserves, without challenging the Government's position on disarmament and reduction of military spending.<sup>131</sup>

Prospects for the new TAF looked good when in 1924 Winston Churchill noted:

we propose this year to begin the formation on a very small scale of a Territorial Air Force, for which £20,000 is taken in the Estimates. Our idea is to have six squadrons stationed near centres where there is a large engineering population, and where aerodromes are available. Each squadron would have a small nucleus of regular air mechanics and it is hoped that the skilled voluntary element in the neighbourhood will form this small nucleus.<sup>132</sup>

Churchill was outlining the basic principles of the TAF but potential problems of a voluntary reserve were noted by the Under Secretary of State who believed that a reserve for the RAF would be "doomed to failure, unless managed by the existing County Associations, who had the necessary administrative machinery and experience."<sup>133</sup> Parallels can be drawn between the nature of the TAF and the World

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TNA, AIR 2/273, Formation of the Territorial Air Force, "Territorial Air Force", Chief of Air Staff, 18<sup>th</sup> May 1920.

<sup>131</sup>

Andrew Boyle, *Trenchard*, (London, 1962) p203.

<sup>132</sup>

Winston Churchill, Speech to the House of Commons, 1<sup>st</sup> March 1921. Available at: <http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1921/mar/01/mr-churchills-statement-1st-March-1921> Viewed 11<sup>th</sup> June 2013.

<sup>133</sup>

War I Pals battalions where friendships, working relationships and shared locations were crucial in increasing recruitment to the army. Viscount Templewood noted “the intention was to give the officers and men continuity of service in their local unit with all the advantages that come from knowing each other and working together.”<sup>134</sup> Thus schools, businesses, industries and areas sent men to join up, and this maintained the local interest in the battalion throughout the duration of the war. In the same vein, TAF squadrons were to be comprised of local volunteers serving at a local aerodrome and this, it was hoped, would attract support from the local community.

The winter of 1920-21 saw a downturn in the economy brought about by large reductions in government spending, an increase of taxation and the failure to increase British exports. Coupled with overproduction there was a decline in demand for coal and textiles resulting in a rise in unemployment. The government blamed high levels of public expenditure for much of the economic crisis and appointed Sir Edward Geddes to chair the committee on National Expenditure. The final report, published in February 1922, was nicknamed the Geddes Axe, a sweeping round of public service cuts specifically in the army, navy, education and public health. It was in this political climate that Trenchard began to lobby for the new reserve forces to be created. However, concerns were raised about whether “air crew, and especially pilots, could achieve and retain proficiency in the air as a part-time and mainly

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TNA, AIR 2/273, Formation of the Territorial Air Force, “Territorial Air Force”, Chief of Air Staff, 18<sup>th</sup> May 1920.

<sup>134</sup>

Viscount Templewood, *Empire of the Air The Advent of the Air Age 1922-29*, (London, 1957), pp190-191.



weekend activity.”<sup>135</sup> Following a meeting on 5<sup>th</sup> June 1923, notes regarding the formation of Special Reserve and Auxiliary Air Force squadrons located in the National Archives talk about the necessity for two separate organisations:

The creation of the second and third line squadrons was in the nature of an experiment as the RAF, unlike the Army or Navy, had never had either a Special Reserve or Territorial force. It was considered necessary to form two separate organisations so that the conditions of service for the reserve provided for enlistment on as broad a basis as possible. Also, as the creation of the reserve forces was experimental, the most efficient and economical method of administration could only be ascertained by experience and two separate forces would provide a wider national appeal. In addition, it might be necessary to expand to a large number of squadrons in either or both forces which ever proved by experience to be the more efficient and popular form or organisation.<sup>136</sup>

Judging from these preliminary talks regarding the creation of two different types of reserve forces it would appear that the SR squadrons were in direct competition with the AAF squadrons from the start and this is apparent from the way in which they were created in a way that was deliberately different to ascertain which type of

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<sup>135</sup>

Armitage, *The Royal Air Force*, p58.

<sup>136</sup>

TNA, AIR2/696, Re-organisation of Special Reserve Squadrons as Auxiliary Air Force Squadrons, “Notes regarding the formation of Special Reserve and Auxiliary Air Force squadrons, Necessity for two separate organisations, 6<sup>th</sup> September 1923

squadron recruited better than the other, and which functioned in a more cost effective and administrative manner. Men like Trenchard, who were pushing forward plans to create a reserve force for the RAF clearly looked at the actions of the army as a baseline upon which to model the reserve forces of the RAF. This becomes clear when we see that “the Special Reserve squadrons were intended to be formed on a militia basis, whilst the Auxiliary Air Force was to be formed more nearly on a territorial basis.”<sup>137</sup> Samuel Hoare was Secretary of State for Air and one of the staunch advocates of the AAF. The idea in general was that SR squadrons would attract people to whom a closer connection with the life of the regular air force appealed, while AAF squadrons envisaged the recruitment of officers and men who wished to serve together on a more local and amateur basis.<sup>138</sup> With regard to the SR squadrons, “the idea was following the lines of the militia, to provide a means of bringing skeleton units quickly to full strength with trained reservists....in consequence it has been considered that Cadre units would be expected to be mobilised and ready appreciably sooner than AAF units.”<sup>139</sup>

In 1924 the Auxiliary Air Force and Air Forces Reserve Act was passed. This allowed for six Auxiliary squadrons and seven SR squadrons, the eventual aim being twenty Auxiliary squadrons in total. The SR squadrons were to be cadre squadrons with

<sup>137</sup>

TNA, Cabinet Papers Number 47 (25) Sir Samuel Hoare's statement on Air Estimates, 7<sup>th</sup> October 1925.

<sup>138</sup>

TNA, AIR2/696, Re-organisation of Special Reserve Squadrons as Auxiliary Air Force Squadrons, “Notes regarding the formation of Special Reserve and Auxiliary Air Force squadrons, Necessity for two separate organisations, 6<sup>th</sup> September 1931.

<sup>139</sup>

Ibid, 6<sup>th</sup> September 1931.

their main role to be providing the defence of the United Kingdom. John James notes that “the Special Reserve squadrons were in some measure the equivalent of the territorial battalions of the County Regiments or even territorial units of the Corps.”<sup>140</sup> They were organised as heavy bomber squadrons and all of their squadron numbers were located in the 500s. “All the SR squadrons would be commanded by a regular officer and given a nucleus of regular Senior Non-Commissioned Officers and airmen to support the two-thirds or so of the unit strength drawn from the reservists living nearby.”<sup>141</sup> The notes<sup>142</sup> regarding the formation of SR and AAF squadrons highlight the main differences between the two types of squadrons. With regard to the SR squadrons, officers and men were to be recruited direct by the units, officers were taught to fly in the units, airmen had to be skilled tradesmen and were enlisted in their trades and the squadrons were formed near centres of engineering population. The AAF on the other hand recruited both officers and airmen through the local Territorial and AAF associations, officers were not accepted unless they could already fly and on acceptance the cost of training was refunded, airmen need not be skilled tradesmen because they were taught their trades in the units and squadrons were formed near large towns and had town headquarters where training was carried on throughout the year culminating in an annual camp.<sup>143</sup>

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<sup>140</sup>

John James, *The Paladins. A Social History of the RAF up to the Outbreak of World War II*, (London, 1990) p98.

<sup>141</sup>

Armitage, *The Royal Air Force*, p58.

<sup>142</sup>

TNA, AIR2/696, Re-organisation of Special Reserve Squadrons as Auxiliary Air Force Squadrons, “Notes regarding the formation of Special Reserve and Auxiliary Air Force squadrons, Necessity for two separate organisations, 6<sup>th</sup> September 1931.

<sup>143</sup>

In June 1925 Air Ministry Pamphlet No 2 entitled "Notes for the information of candidates for commissions in the General Duties Branch for service in Special Reserve Squadrons" stated:

Special Reserve Squadrons will be raised and maintained in certain localities as part of the air defence of Great Britain. In peacetime each of these squadrons will be located at an aerodrome in the vicinity of the town from which the Special Reserve personnel of the squadron are recruited. Each squadron is associated for purposes of Home Defence with a regular air force aerodrome which will form its war station and to which it will proceed when called out to take its place in the air defences of the country.....approximately two thirds of the squadron will be composed of Special Reserve personnel living in the neighbourhood of the aerodrome and keeping themselves efficient by attendance at the aerodrome and compliance otherwise with the conditions of their service. These conditions are made as elastic as possible to minimise interference with the civil life of officers and airmen.<sup>144</sup>

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TNA, AIR2/696, Re-organisation of Special Reserve Squadrons as Auxiliary Air Force Squadrons, "Notes regarding the formation of Special Reserve and Auxiliary Air Force squadrons, Necessity for two separate organisations, 6<sup>th</sup> September 1931.

<sup>144</sup>

Leslie Hunt, *Twenty-One Squadrons. The History of the Royal Auxiliary Air Force 1925-1957*, (London, 1972), p10.

These conditions of service were different from those of the AAF. Selection of officers to new AAF squadrons was left to the Commanding Officer of each squadron who “will nominate to the Air Ministry gentlemen to fill the remaining vacancies on the establishment of his unit.”<sup>145</sup> The way in which the reserve forces were created highlighted the thinking of those in power in the Air Ministry and the way in which they were influenced by the history of the military at that time. The clear differences between the SR based on the old Militia and the AAF on the other hand “resembling much more closely the old Yeomanry regiments, drawn from the landed and fairly well-to-do gentry of the countryside. The Auxiliary Squadrons with their air of the gentlemen’s club or the hunt were day or light bomber units.”<sup>146</sup>

In an era when flying was a growing sport and air displays a popular form of entertainment, the reserve units had little difficulty in attracting recruits. Many squadrons ran an active social programme and some took on the characteristics of a club, often clubs with a membership of high social standing. Viscount Templewood, Secretary of State for War, commented:

Trenchard envisaged the Auxiliaries as a *corps d’elite* composed of the kind of young men who earlier would have been interested in horses but who now wished to serve their country in machines. He conceived the

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<sup>145</sup>

TNA, AIR2/696, Re-organisation of Special Reserve Squadrons as Auxiliary Air Force Squadrons, “Notes regarding the formation of Special Reserve and Auxiliary Air Force squadrons, Necessity for two separate organisations, 6<sup>th</sup> September 1931.

<sup>146</sup>

James, *The Paladins*, p98.

new mechanical yeomanry with its aeroplanes based on the great centres of industry. *Esprit de corps* was to be the dominating force in the squadrons and each, therefore, was to have a well-equipped headquarters, mess and distinctive life of its own. Social meetings were to be encouraged and on no account was any squadron to be regarded as a reserve for filling up regular units.<sup>147</sup>

Having considered the formation of the two different types of reserve squadrons, the evidence suggests that the decision was taken to set up the AAF and SR squadrons on different lines in order to appeal to different volunteers. However, as time went on, members of the RAF Establishment Committee began to consider their options with regard to personnel in the future and the idea of merging the SR squadrons into the AAF began to be discussed. Accordingly, "as early as 1926, the then Air Officer Commanding, SR and AAF proposed the merger of the SR squadrons into the AAF. He suggested that the formation of each type was experimental and that experience had now shown that this would be the best course...in 1930, a Sub-Committee of the RAF Establishment Committee reporting on another matter suggested that an enquiry was desirable as to whether the SR squadrons should not be dropped. In 1933 it was noted that:

for some time past I have been watching the comparative progress of the Auxiliary and the Cadre squadrons. I do not think that there is any

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<sup>147</sup>

Viscount Templewood, *Empire of the Air*, p190.

doubt that in general *esprit de corps* and efficiency in doing the duties assigned to them, the Auxiliary squadrons are far superior. I find that in past discussions of the subject, it has been generally agreed that it would be advantageous to do away with the distinctive features of the SR squadrons in favour of the AAF. Furthermore, a decision to convert SR squadrons into AAF squadrons would be a timely recognition of the progress of the AAF and one which full advantage could be taken in the Estimates Speech.<sup>148</sup>

It was also pointed out that “speaking very broadly the SR squadrons have been more difficult to recruit and somewhat less successful in the result than the AAF squadrons, more especially as regards airmen. This may arise from the fact that the latter have the civic organisation and tradition of a county association behind them, an advantage which the SR squadrons do not enjoy.”<sup>149</sup> Other reasons given were that officers were not taught to fly in the AAF units whilst some SR officers are already pilots on joining. Skilled tradesmen did not desire to work in their spare time at their own trades. They joined the SR units to learn to do something different. The sub-committee claimed that these reasons coupled with the great success in

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TNA, AIR2/696, Re-organisation of Special Reserve Squadrons as Auxiliary Air Force Squadrons, “Notes regarding the formation of Special Reserve and Auxiliary Air Force squadrons, Air Council, “The future of the Special Reserve Squadrons,” 5<sup>th</sup> April 1935.

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TNA, AIR2/696, Re-organisation of Special Reserve Squadrons as Auxiliary Air Force Squadrons, “Notes regarding the formation of Special Reserve and Auxiliary Air Force squadrons, Air Council, “The future of the Special Reserve Squadrons,” 5<sup>th</sup> April 1935.

efficiency achieved by AAF squadrons suggested that all units ought to be on AAF lines."<sup>150</sup>

The arguments put forward, in favour of the merger were that there would be a greater economy of personnel. There would also be a greater ease in recruiting men, because choice would be limited to one rather than two organisations. This would mean that those who wanted to become members of the RAF volunteers would know exactly what they were volunteering for and what was required of them, rather than having to look at two different sets of rules, regulations and opportunities. Another reason given for the merger was the possibility of higher professional standards, because recruiting procedures would be adhered to strictly due to the lack of choice available. Also, there was the idea that the unit belonged to the volunteers and there was likely to be a greater esprit de corps if the men were largely reserves as opposed to being largely regulars with a small number of volunteers. Another idea put forward was that an AAF unit which was fostered by the town or country would have much more local influence and atmosphere than a regular squadron because the men would all have dual roles in both the local community and as part of the squadron as a whole. Finally there was at the time, more interest in the AAF than in the SR squadrons.

The appointment of Adolf Hitler to the post of Chancellor in Germany in January 1933 prompted a realisation that a new threat to national security was emerging and

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<sup>150</sup>

Tom Moulson, *The Flying Sword, the Story of 601 Squadron*, (London, 1964), P93.



led to the first of eight rearmament schemes being drawn up and approved by the Cabinet in July 1934.<sup>151</sup> A major expansion of the RAF was announced with the number of Home Defence squadrons being increased from fifty-two to seventy five. The total first-line strength of the RAF was to be increased to one hundred and twenty eight squadrons within five years.<sup>152</sup> On 22 May 1935, the British Government voted to treble the number of frontline military aircraft available to defend British soil. This amounted to an increase of fifteen hundred aircraft of all types.<sup>153</sup> However by July 1936, the lack of a cohesive and modern strategy for the RAF was starting to cause major concerns. As a result of RAF expansion, the Air Council decided to re-organise the Air Defence of Great Britain into four specialised Commands.<sup>154</sup> Under this system, the individual Air Officers Commanding were responsible for the planning and development of their Command, whilst the Chief of the Air Staff remained in overall control of operational policy. This enabled the RAF to function in a more coordinated way and to plan more effectively for the impending war with Germany.

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<sup>151</sup>

TNA, Cabinet Papers, Number 71 (34) May 21<sup>st</sup> 1934.

<sup>152</sup>

Royal Air Force, *Short History of the Royal Air Force*, Chapter 2, The inter-War Years, p88. Available at:

<http://www.raf.mod.uk/history/shorthistoryoftheroyalairforce.cfm> Viewed on 6<sup>th</sup> November 2016.

<sup>153</sup>

Neville Jones, *The Beginnings of Strategic Air Power. A History of the British Bomber Force 1923-1939*, (Abingdon, 1987), p102.

<sup>154</sup>

Jones, *The Beginnings of Strategic Air Power*. p102.

Viscount Swinton was Secretary of State for Air and was given the challenge in 1935 of expanding the RAF. He has been described as “the architect of the renaissance of the Royal Air Force and the most emphatic (Cabinet) exponent of effective rearmament.”<sup>155</sup> As the RAF was expanded under a series of schemes which involved setting up a system of “shadow armament” factories operating side by side with industries still engaged in peace-time production, it was envisaged that there would be no interference with normal industry and trade. Thus the motor-vehicle industry became the leading participant working alongside the manufacture of both airframes and aero-engines. Swinton also helped to end the bitter conflict between the Royal Navy and the RAF over the control of naval aviation which had hampered inter-service co-operation in the 1920s and 1930s.<sup>156</sup>

Following the merger of the SR squadrons into the AAF in 1936, it became apparent that the AAF nationally was running at around 51% of establishment and the idea of a new reserve began to be discussed with emphasis being on the ease of entry into the new reserve. The AAF was violently opposed to any idea of grafting an enlarged reserve onto its organisation.<sup>157</sup> As a result, the RAFVR was formed as a more democratic organisation, largely for men who were interested in flying as a sport with the military aspect and military discipline in the background. Broadly the aim was to train 800 pilots a year in an organisation based not on the County Associations but

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<sup>155</sup>

J A Cross, *Lord Swinton*, (Oxford, 1982) p144.

<sup>156</sup>

Jones, *The Beginnings of Strategic Air Power*, p103.

<sup>157</sup>

TNA, AIR 41/4, RAF Monograph (Second Draft) “Flying Training 1934-1942, Air Historical Branch, p44.

on Town Centres situated in industrial areas. The necessary sites were acquired, the contracts with civil flying firms concluded, and the RAFVR came into being in April 1937.<sup>158</sup> Its purpose was to fill the gaps between the entry requirements of the AAF and the regular RAF, “the intention was to convey a clear message that whilst there was an educational hurdle to be surmounted there were to be no social barriers for reservists to cross.”<sup>159</sup>

Planning for the new reserve took place within the Air Member for Personnel Department (AMP) where Air Commodore Arthur Tedder was Director of Training. In February 1936 W L Scott, a senior civil servant in S7, the branch of the Air Ministry Secretariat which served AMP, put forward a paper incorporating the radical ideas which were being discussed within the Department, together with some of his own ideas. It contained proposals which explicitly took account of social attitudes in the mid-1930s. Scott wrote that the intention was to recruit from the poorer secondary school boys to the boys from the more expensive public schools. Entry was to be in the rank of Aircraftsman Second Class (AC2) with promotion to sergeant on the following day. This decision to enrol men as sergeants rather than officers reflects a clear choice between the public school man and the secondary school man. In practice the RAFVR came to contain men from the wide range of educational background which had been envisaged in its planning – from the universities and public schools to council elementary schools backed up with night school study. Four

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<sup>158</sup>

Dean, *The Royal Air Force*, p78.

<sup>159</sup>

Tony Mansell, ‘The Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve 1936-1939’ in *RAF Reserve and Auxiliary Forces*, (Oxford, 2003) p30.

possible names for the reserves were put forward, Citizen Air Force, Royal Volunteer Air Force, Civic Division of the Royal Air Force and Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve. There was no doubt “that the public schools as a whole are, even now, extraordinarily ignorant and misinformed about the Service, despite some valuable individual propaganda work. We have in fact scarcely begun to touch what shall be our main source of supply for pilots, and unless we can take some effective steps at once to enlist the support of the schools there is a grave risk that the greatly increased annual requirements will lead to a general lowering of the standards of entry.”<sup>160</sup> Scott noted that “the use of the AAF organisation as an alternative to the present scheme based on the existing RAF Reserve had been fully considered by the Air Ministry but had finally been rejected by the Secretary of State, partly because a separate organisation could be set up with less delay, and partly because the proposed Volunteer Reserve in which officers and men were to be on the same social standing could not be developed satisfactorily within the AAF units in the TA organisation.”<sup>161</sup>

The RAFVR was not organised as squadrons. Town centres were used close to aerodromes. Treasury approval was obtained in July 1936, but there were some delays in getting money released for flying training between January and April 1937. Between January and April 1937 men had to spend a full time period at an existing

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<sup>160</sup>

TNA, AIR41/65, The Second World War 1939-1945. Royal Air Force Manning. Plans and Policy, ‘The formation of the Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve’ p15.

<sup>161</sup>

TNA, AIR 41/4, RAF Monograph, Flying Training 1934-1942, Air Historical Branch, ‘Reserves’, p113.

Elementary and Reserve Flying Training School (ERFTS) before returning home to continue training at a local airfield. By October 1937 there were 19 EFRTS in operation. This method of training was new because it was based on a network of civil aerodromes with each of them linked to a town centre. The latter was provided as a centre for the ground instruction of the volunteers and was also intended to be a focal point for their social activities. Men had to attend aerodrome centres on alternative weekends and went to town centres for ground instruction on weekday evenings. There was a compulsory 15 day period of continuous annual training. The aerodrome centres were open every day so men could put in additional attendance. It was certainly in the interests of firms running the centres to encourage as much attendance as possible since their income was related to the number of flying hours they produced. After the Munich Conference where Germany's annexation of the Sudetenland was agreed, some who had reached an appropriate stage of training were required to spend a period of attachment to an RAF squadron. In late 1938 AMP noted with satisfaction that around 50% of employers approached had proved willing to allow such periods of release for their men. Not everyone who joined the RAFVR was able to fly and those who did not make the grade as pilots re-mustered as observers and other categories of aircrew. By November 1938 recruitment for observers, wireless operators, air gunners and ground crew began. So for the RAFVR, young men were to be attracted from the middle class in its widest sense with no suggestion of any pre-determined social hierarchy. The sporting aspects of flying were to be stressed in recruitment.

Thus, the RAFVR would have a wider appeal to potential pilot recruits and would ensure that background and status did not become an obstacle for enlistment, as

perceived to be the case in the AAF. Air Vice Marshal, Arthur Tedder, intended that the RAFVR should not be connected to the County Associations to whom the AAF was connected and largely controlled. He intended to recruit from a wide range, including poorer secondary school boys as well as boys from the more expensive public schools, since these young men from contrasting social backgrounds would have to be able to work together both in the air and on the ground. Subsequently Tedder's idea was that the RAFVR would be more accessible to local people because regulations surrounding entry were less rigid. Members of the RAFVR did not need to be officers to fly, and it also allowed men without a trade to become serving members enabling them to train on entry. The decision to create the RAFVR was significant since:

In January 1938 the AAF was running at only 51% of its peacetime establishment of pilots and following a committee of enquiry chaired by Under Secretary of State, Harold Balfour, it was forced to begin – in the face of opposition from amongst its squadrons – to train some of its own non-commissioned ground and aircrew members as pilots to compensate for the shortfall of its officer numbers. Even so, it entered the war still seriously below its established strength.<sup>162</sup>

The original plan for the RAFVR was based on Scheme F requirements and was the recruitment of 800 pilots in each of the years 1936, 1937 and 1938, but the Reserve made a late start with recruiting not beginning until January 1937 and the

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<sup>162</sup>

programme had therefore to be modified.<sup>163</sup> By 1939, there were approximately five thousand RAFVR pilots. It was hoped that by January 1939, 33 aerodromes and 26 town centres would be providing training for a population of 2500 volunteer reservists. It was contemplated also that an aircrew, as opposed to a pilot's selection would also be formed in the RAFVR. It was also intended eventually to form a ground section into which civilians would be entered for training as officers in equipment, medical, engineering, signals and other specialist duties if and when the need arose.<sup>164</sup> The progress and development of the RAFVR was slow due to lack of aircraft and equipment. It was not until the lack of reserves became seriously alarming in 1938 that there was any large expansion of the RAFVR. Up to the outbreak of war the RAFVR consisted mainly of pilots who had been trained to fly elementary types of aircraft. Some provision of advanced and service aircraft was made in 1938 and 1939 and the scheme was extended to non-pilot aircrew. Combined with the AAF the two reserve forces made up a large pool of pilots and airmen who would be ready to fight if war broke out. By the outbreak of the Second World War, the RAF had a valuable reservoir of sixty-three thousand men trained as pilots as well as in medical and technical trades.<sup>165</sup>

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<sup>163</sup>

TNA, AIR41/65, The Second World War 1939-1945. Royal Air Force Manning. Plans and Policy, 'The formation of the Royal Air Force Volunteer reserve' p15.

<sup>164</sup>

TNA, AIR41/65, The Second World War 1939-1945. Royal Air Force Manning. Plans and Policy, 'The formation of the Royal Air Force Volunteer reserve' p15.

<sup>165</sup>

Wing Commander Alex Dickson, *The Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve - Memories*, RAF Innsworth (Gloucester, 1997) p24.

The strain on national resources combined with the realisation that the pursuit of parity had failed to halt German rearmament led during the second half of 1937 to a Treasury Review of Defence Expenditure, which in turn caused a complete reappraisal of British overseas and defence policy. Sir Thomas Inskip, Minister for the Co-ordination of Defence, carried this out and he submitted his report to the Cabinet on 15<sup>th</sup> December 1937. Inskip's review, entitled "Interim Report on Defence Expenditure" marked the start of a fundamental change in British preparations for any future war in the air. He argued that the role of the RAF should not be to deliver an early knockout blow to the Germans but instead to prevent them from knocking out the British.<sup>166</sup> This was a complete reversal of priorities. The emphasis had moved from long-range bomber production to that of fighter production. As a consequence of German rearmament, the Spanish Civil War and the Munich crisis of 1938, the RAF began an expansion programme which resulted in a further eight AAF squadrons being formed. In 1937, priority was given to bomber production, then a year later fewer bombers and more fighters. After the Munich crisis, by late 1938, the emphasis was on creating modern fighter aircraft. At the start of 1939, RAF strength stood at 135 squadrons, and in addition to this, the AAF comprised 19 squadrons.<sup>167</sup> In August 1939 members of the AAF and RAFVR were embodied into the RAF. There were twenty-one AAF squadrons at the outbreak of war, fourteen squadrons which were fighter units, four squadrons that operated under the control of Coastal Command and two squadrons whose duties were army co-operation. Shores notes:

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<sup>166</sup>

Barry D Powers, *Strategy without Slide Rule. British Air Strategy 1914-1939*, (London, 1976) p243.

<sup>167</sup>

Rawlings, *The History of the Royal Air Force*, p87.



at this stage, as the AAF was being mobilised, all units were undoubtedly at their most 'pure' as 'auxiliary' squadrons. Certainly their ground crew personnel were essentially those who had faithfully served their chosen units throughout much of the 1930s and who were all enlisted under provisions which allowed the AAF personnel to refuse a posting to any other unit.<sup>168</sup>

In 1939 the AAF was merged into the RAF for the duration of hostilities, moreover a major change in recruitment took place in 1939 when a Committee under the chairmanship of Sir James Barnes, Under Secretary of State for Air recommended increases in pay and allowances for the AAF and also required them to accept airmen pilots, first by training some of their own ground crew and then by taking in direct-entry men. Many AAF squadrons reacted violently to this order but were forced to comply and this resulted in a handful of AAF Sergeant Pilots in British AAF squadrons. On enlistment, recruits for other ranks were guaranteed that they would never be called upon to serve further than five miles from their home airfield. By the end of the war, the original twenty one AAF squadrons "became increasingly indistinguishable from all of the other squadrons fielded by the wartime RAF,"<sup>169</sup> due to an influx of pilots and aircrew from the RAFVR, the RAF and aircrew from allied forces and original members of the AAF being posted out to different squadrons.

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<sup>168</sup>

Christopher Shores, *The Auxiliary Air Force in WWII, in Royal Air Force Reserve and Auxiliary Forces*, (Oxford, 2003) p40.

<sup>169</sup>

Shores, *The Auxiliary Air Force in WWII*, p54.

Furthermore, all new members to the Royal Air Force during the war were recruited and trained through the RAFVR.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter has used existing literature and documents from the National Archive to analyse the reasons why not one but three different forms of the TAF were formed. Using the TA and the RNVR as a model, the men in the Air Ministry and the government shaped what they believed would be a reserve which could be called upon, should the need arise, to defend the country. As Peter Dennis noted when writing about the TA, “the volunteers had originally been established as a private and exclusive military club, membership of which entailed the payment of entrance and annual fees.”<sup>170</sup> This idea is reflected by some of the AAF squadrons who took on the characteristics of a club, and perhaps explains why the AAF wanted to maintain their exclusivity throughout the organisation’s existence. Similarly, Lord Haldane wanted the TA to be managed locally, and the AAF was managed by local committees as well. Furthermore, it is very apparent that the creation and organisation of the RAF reserve during the inter-war period was based upon the recruitment process and structure of the army; therefore, being nominated for a commission was linked to social and political influence. It is understandable that the TA would have such an influence on the creation of the RAF reserve, since throughout its history, it had been regarded as successful. Also, there had never been an RAF reserve before, so the

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<sup>170</sup>

Peter Dennis, *The Territorial Army 1906-1940*, (Suffolk, 1987) p3.

government was bound in a way to look at what else existed. The setting up of two different organisations, the AAF and the SR, was an experiment so that the conditions of service provided for enlistment on as broad a basis as possible. Moreover, they were looking for the most efficient and economical organisation. Once it was realised that the AAF was the more popular of the two, the SR was merged into the AAF; the experiment had drawn to its conclusion. However, the poor performance of the Auxiliaries in terms of recruitment meant that the idea for a new reserve with the emphasis being on ease of entry came along and was acted upon bringing the RAFVR into the picture. Consequently, this chapter has provided a detailed examination of the reasoning behind the way in which the TAF was developed, and has focused on the ideas behind the decisions which were made, based upon the existing two reserve forces.

## **Chapter 2**

### **The Recruitment Process of the Territorial Air Force 1925-1939**

#### **Introduction**

This chapter examines the way in which men were recruited for the three different organisations – the Auxiliary Air Force (AAF), the Special Reserve (SR) squadrons and the Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve (RAFVR). It will consider how these men joined, and what kinds of men were accepted into the organisations as both pilots and officers. It will also analyse the influences class and social status had on recruitment in the run up to the Second World War. As Christopher Shores points out:

The activities and recruiting policies of some of these units during the 1930s led many to gain the impression that the members of these squadrons were arrogant and snobbish, considering themselves to be a privileged elite – an impression which appears on occasion not to have been undeserved. Had these young men, with their sports cars, hunters and Savile Row uniforms, been a little more liberal in their entry policies, the RAF might have had rather more trained pilots in the AAF and fewer vacant slots to fill from the slim reserves of the regular RAF.<sup>171</sup>

It will be a central aim of this chapter to assess the validity of this idea. The chapter also explores the key differences between the Auxiliary squadrons and the SR squadrons, as well as the main reasons for the idea of merging the SR squadrons into the AAF squadrons. It will briefly discuss the newly formed University Air Squadrons (UAS) which were set up to promote “air mindedness” and to stimulate an interest in and research into matters aeronautical.<sup>172</sup> The chapter then considers recruitment into the RAFVR and finally gives an insight into the key role played by voluntary activity in the inter-war period.

The creation and organisation of the Royal Air Force (RAF) reserve forces during the interwar period was based upon the recruitment process and structure of the army.<sup>173</sup>

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<sup>171</sup>

Christopher Shores, ‘The Auxiliary Air Force in WWII,’ in *Royal Air Force Reserve and Auxiliary Forces*, (Oxford, 2003) pp40-41.

<sup>172</sup>

Wing Commander Gerry Margiotta, ‘University Air Squadrons in WWII’, in *Royal Air Force Reserve and Auxiliary Forces*, (Oxford, 2003) p67.

<sup>173</sup>

This meant that prior to 1871, the initial process of being nominated for a commission was linked to social and political influence rather than intellectual, military or technical ability. Reforms directed by Edward Cardwell, Secretary of State for War, removed the purchase of commissions whereby officers were drawn from the aristocracy and landed gentry and sought to streamline the recruitment process. Cardwell's reforms meant that recruiting for regiments took place locally and this model for the army became the framework upon which the AAF was built, linking the locality to the squadron.<sup>174</sup> Furthermore, the AAF came to resemble the entrepreneurial private forces of the pre-Cardwell period as it relied upon its pilots holding a pilot's licence, which meant that they had to come from wealthier backgrounds since flying was new and expensive. The AAF, was shaped in part by a pre-war ambiguity about the value of the air services *per se*, but also shaped by older military traditions such as the yeomanry, pre-Cardwell commissions and regimental systems; it also developed its own distinctive culture. The selection process that operated in the AAF based as it was on the availability of time, money and connections, was undeniably elitist and can be contrasted with government and public service recruitment which increasingly bore the imprint of a more democratic and accessible male culture or indeed the regular RAF and Territorial Army (TA) which were also more egalitarian organisations.

Sir Hugh Trenchard wanted to create an air force reserve that would be raised on a territorial basis and which would allow for the skills and expertise that had been developed within the Royal Flying Corps (RFC) to be preserved, thus allowing for

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Peter Dennis, *The Territorial Army 1906-1940*, (Suffolk, 1987) p3.

<sup>174</sup>

Hugh Cunningham, *The Volunteer Force*, (London, 1975) pp104-109.

future expansion when the political climate was more propitious. In July 1920, the Air Ministry proposed a scheme by which the TAF would be created with a view to taking responsibility for the aerial defence of the United Kingdom and, should the need arise, reinforcing numbers in the RAF. By taking this route, Trenchard would be able to use the TAF as an alternative to asking for extra money for the RAF, and he would not be going against the Government's position on disarmament and on reducing military expenditure.

Churchill, in 1924, announced a new proposal which would begin the formation of the TAF, allowing £20,000 from the annual estimates. The plan was to set up six squadrons which would be stationed near engineering centres. However, the Under Secretary of State highlighted potential problems if the TAF squadrons were not managed by the existing County Associations, since they had the necessary experience and administration skills to manage the new volunteer squadrons efficiently. In this way, the new TAF would function in a way, as explained in the previous chapter, which was similar to the Pals battalions from World War I where recruitment was based on both friendships and working relationships and familiarity with a particular area were all important in increasing recruitment to the army. It was hoped therefore, that the TAF squadrons would attract a steady flow of volunteers who would serve on a part-time basis at a local aerodrome in familiar surroundings, and that this close proximity to the local town would mean that each new squadron would be taken to the heart of the local community.

In the initial formation of the AAF, the Commanding Officer of each unit would be appointed by the Air Ministry after consultation with the Territorial Force Association (TFA) concerned. The Commanding Officer, after consultation with the TFA, would nominate to the Air Ministry, gentlemen who would be able to fill the remaining vacancies on the establishment of his unit. Officers had to be physically fit and aged upon appointment between 25 and 33. Officers would be required to provide service dress uniform only. They would receive an outfit grant of £40 and a full issue of flying kit gratis. The annual training required of an officer of the Territorial Air Force consisted of: instructional parades, periodic flying and annual camp. Officers within the authorized establishment would receive pay and allowances at current RAF rates. For the other ranks, Men must be between the ages of 18 and 38, and be physically fit. They would enlist for a period of four years with the option to increase this term on a twelve month basis. The issue of uniform and personal equipment was provided by the state. The annual training which was required by an airman of the Territorial Air Force would consist of instructional parades and annual training in camp.<sup>175</sup>

This information which sets out the terms and conditions of recruitment and service within the TAF was also superimposed upon the terms and conditions of the AAF. Furthermore, within the Air Ministry documents there is a noticeable muddling up between the terms for the AAF and the TAF in the early years of the 1920s.

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<sup>175</sup>

The National Archives (TNA), AIR 2/273, Formation of Auxiliary Air Force, 'Summary of Scheme for Auxiliary Air Force', Appendix II, 24<sup>th</sup> January 1925.



The Secretary of State for Air, Sir Samuel Hoare, announced at Colchester on October 18<sup>th</sup> 1923 that “changes to the Royal Air Force would involve three kinds of squadrons. In the first place there will be a backbone of highly trained regular squadrons for the work of fighting, and in addition, a number of Special Reserve squadrons, one third of the personnel of which will be composed of regulars and the remainder of reserve men. There will be a third section of auxiliary bombing squadrons, in which there is to be only a small regular personnel for purpose of administration and instruction.”<sup>176</sup> By this means the country would be provided for the first time with a substantial air force for home defence with an increase of less than ten thousand officers and men. In other words, the existing air power would be doubled with an addition of only one third of its present personnel.<sup>177</sup> Furthermore, if this new plan was to be successful, the patriotic co-operation of the youth and able bodied men of the nation would be important, since in the main, the SR squadrons and the AAF squadrons entirely, will be dependent upon volunteers.<sup>178</sup>

**Table 1 - Principles governing the SR and AAF squadrons**<sup>179</sup>

SPECIAL RESERVE SQUADRONS	AUXILIARY AIR FORCE SQUADRONS
SR officers and airmen were recruited	Officers and airmen were obtained

<sup>176</sup>

<sup>177</sup> *The Times*, October 18<sup>th</sup> 1923, p13.

<sup>178</sup>

<sup>179</sup> *The Times*, October 18<sup>th</sup> 1923, p13.

<sup>178</sup>

<sup>179</sup> *The Times*, November 14<sup>th</sup> 1923, p19.

<sup>179</sup>

TNA, AIR 2/273, Formation of Auxiliary Air Force, “Summing up of scheme for Auxiliary Air Force”, Appendix II, 24<sup>th</sup> January 1925.

direct by the units.	through the local Territorial and AAF associations.
Officers were taught to fly in the units.	Officers were not accepted unless they had learned to fly. On acceptance the cost of training was refunded.
Airmen had to be skilled tradesmen and were enlisted in their trades.	Airmen need not be skilled tradesmen. They were taught their trades in the units.
An SR squadron was normally organised in two or three flights, one of which was entirely regular and the others composed of SR personnel. Headquarters consisted entirely of regular personnel.	An AAF organisation was normally organised in three flights of AAF personnel, controlled and trained by a small permanent headquarters staff.
Each squadron was commanded by a regular officer,	Each squadron was commanded by an AAF officer.
The squadron was formed near centres of engineering population.	Squadrons were formed by large towns and had town headquarters where training was carried out throughout the year, culminating in an annual camp.

Following the new Auxiliary Air Force and Air Forces Reserve Act of 1924, there was an allowance for six auxiliary squadrons and seven SR squadrons, the idea being to supplement the RAF personnel with additional volunteers. The AAF and SR Squadrons were in direct competition with each other to attract as many men as possible. Pilot volunteers to the SR were taught to fly within the squadron. Volunteer airmen had to be skilled tradesmen in civilian life and remained within their trade in the squadron. These SR squadrons were formed near centres of engineering, therefore ensuring that their appeal would be to men who wanted a closer connection with the life of the regular RAF. Consequently, the SR squadrons resembled the militia from the early days of the Territorial Army. The Auxiliary Air Force, on the other hand, recruited both officers and airmen through the local Territorial and Auxiliary Air Force Associations. Officers were not accepted unless

they could already fly, and on acceptance, the cost of their flying training was refunded. Airmen did not need to be skilled tradesmen because they were taught their trade within the unit, giving airmen recruits the opportunity to learn something totally different from their civilian occupation. Squadrons were formed near large towns, and town headquarters carried out training throughout the year culminating in a two week annual camp. In 1925, it was noted that “there has been a notable awakening of interest in all parts of the country in aviation. This enthusiasm is now taking practical form in the support of flying clubs. The RAF is a corps of specialists and only a high degree of skill in individual trades can ensure that the technical equipment can work effectively.”<sup>180</sup>

#### Recruiting within the Special Reserve Squadrons.

The Air Ministry appealed through *The Times* and other newspapers for volunteers to be trained as flying officers on the short-term commission basis. Although applications were to be asked for in writing, over 100 men within the age limits of 18 and 29 called personally at the Air Ministry for official forms. By the late afternoon, numerous postal applications were received.<sup>181</sup> Advertisements made clear that

<sup>180</sup>

*The Times*, October 15<sup>th</sup> 1925, p15.

<sup>181</sup>

*The Times*, January 5<sup>th</sup> 1924, p7.

officer candidates must be at the peak of their physical fitness, since in general terms, at least 50% of candidates failed to come up to the required standard. Moreover, those candidates who were living sedentary lives, should begin to prepare themselves physically for their examination. It was hoped that by the end of 1924, there would be more than 800 pilots in the reserve squadrons.<sup>182</sup>

Normal ages for recruitment would be 18-25, but up to 31 if candidates have previously served as a member of the RAF. The initial period of enlistment would be 5 years, which could be extended with the consent of the Air Council for further periods. Officers were taught to fly at public expense. Obligatory uniform, breeches and trousers, boots ankle, black. Puttees. Shirts, white. Walking stick (RAF pattern) A grant of £40 to be available for those not previously commissioned in the RAF.<sup>183</sup>

A good example of how SR squadrons were formed and how men were recruited can be seen through the experience of 501 (County of Gloucester) Fighter Squadron. David Watkins, author of the squadrons history mentions that “in July 1929 two RAF officers arrived at Filton with instructions received from No 1 Air Defence Group to form a SR Cadre Squadron (Day Bomber) in accordance with existing establishment.”<sup>184</sup> One of the first airmen to be recruited was Len Prater who

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<sup>182</sup>

Ibid, p7.

<sup>183</sup>

Leslie Hunt, *Twenty-One Squadrons: The History of the Royal Auxiliary Air Force 1925-1957*, (London, 1972) pp10-11.

<sup>184</sup>

remembered that “after an initial application by letter to join the squadron, there followed an interview with the Adjutant where we were questioned about our interests and reasons for joining. Following a medical examination we were officially sworn in, but uniforms were not issued on the camp so we had to report to the T A & Auxiliary Headquarters at Whiteladies Road in Bristol.”<sup>185</sup> Once a month weekend camps were held which ensured that airmen were proficient in their chosen trade, as all engineering work was thoroughly checked. Consequently all airmen were well trained and recruitment via letter, interview and medical ensured that recruitment followed a specific format.

Getting into an SR squadron as a pilot was largely based on somebody knowing somebody who might make a good member. He would be introduced to the Commanding Officer and if thought suitably compatible, then the wheels were set in motion for the usual Air Ministry interview and medical. Another factor was the provision for taking at least six months off for continuous training. Later, the Air Ministry dropped the six month off work plan for training and agreed that pilots could be trained at weekends.<sup>186</sup> In the case of 501 Squadron, the first few officers joined in June 1932 as “Pilots in Training”, “Already a qualified pilot and member of the local flying club, Cautley Naismyth Shaw owned his own aeroplane, a de Havilland Gypsy Moth, and with his other fellow pilots, Ashley Hall, Tubby Bathurst and Bristol

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David Watkins, *Fear Nothing. The History of No 501 (County of Gloucester) Fighter Squadron*, (Cowden, 1990), pp1-2.

<sup>185</sup>

Ibid, p2.

<sup>186</sup>

Watkins, *Fear Nothing*, p6.

stockbroker Thurlow Laws; Shaw made frequent weekend visits to other flying clubs at Le Touquet and Brussels.”<sup>187</sup>

Recruiting for 502 (Ulster) Squadron began straight after the squadron had been formed, and took various forms. In July 1925, a 502 Squadron Recruiting Office was established in rental premises at 9 Town Hall Street, just off Victoria Street in Belfast, and just over a year later, larger premises were rented on the top floor of a block of business premises close to Donegall Square. As part of the recruitment drive, representatives of the local press were taken on flights which were then well reported in the local newspapers and in journals such as *Ulster Life*. In addition, groups of workers from local firms were brought to Aldergrove to see the squadron at work. Such visits were often the result of talks given to local organisations, schools and societies by the Commanding Officer. On 29<sup>th</sup> March 1928 at Belfast Technical College, he gave an illustrated lecture to 140 representatives of the Association of Shipbuilders, Engineers and Draughtsmen which was followed by a visit to Aldergrove by 150 members of the Association. From time to time, the squadron carried out “around Northern Ireland” flights with formations of aircraft, and these were usually well reported by the press. By the mid-1930s, annual air displays at Aldergrove were also proving to be increasingly important in encouraging recruitment. The first of these was held in July 1933, aircraft from 502 Squadron participated as did visiting aircraft from 602 (County of Glasgow) Squadron, Auxiliary Air Force.<sup>188</sup>

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<sup>187</sup>

Ibid, p6.

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## Recruiting within the Auxiliary Air Force

Trenchard's 1919 White Paper showed that "he realised that a fighting service must possess a non-regular branch with its roots firmly set in the civil life of the country. He visualised his Auxiliaries as successors of the old mounted yeomanry. Men who were now attracted to flying machines, who had leisure and a thirst for adventure they were prepared to indulge in uniform."<sup>189</sup> The conditions of service were different from those of the RAF, the main difference being that the AAF was to be raised and maintained by the County Territorial Associations and manned by locally recruited non-regular personnel, with only a small core of regulars as permanent staff. Lord Edmond Grosvenor was the first commanding officer of No 601 Squadron, and its distinguished membership included Sir Philip Sassoon who was later to become Under-secretary of State for Air. The Marquis of Clydesdale flew with No 602; Lord Willoughby de Broke with 605 and Viscount Runciman with No 607.

Those in power within society in the 1920s and 1930s, for example, were men from prominent local and national families, so the recruitment of officers within the AAF was often shaped by the values of these social elites and based on suitability and background. Thus, as Ross notes:

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Ernie Crombie, Personal Communication, 3<sup>rd</sup> October 2014 (Former member of Queens University Air Squadron).

<sup>189</sup>

Tom Moulson, *The Flying Sword. The Story of 601 Squadron*, (London, 1964).

“Would be officers had to face stiff obstacles. If a vacancy occurred, serving officers would be asked for recommendations. As in the case of airmen, candidates were required to be British subjects of pure European decent, and the sons of British parents. They were first interviewed in depth by the Adjutant. If he felt they were suitable he sent them to the C O’s house for social assessment by the Commanding Officer and his wife.”<sup>190</sup>

Moreover, Shores goes on to argue that “looking at the contacts many of these pilots undoubtedly had, given the social circles in which they moved, they seem to have had many friends in high places, ready and willing to speak well of them.”<sup>191</sup> Tom Moulson, author of 601 (County of London) Squadron points out that “Number 601 Squadron was born in White’s Club, St James’s, W1. This was the favourite club and invariable haunt of Lord Edward Grosvenor, a veteran pilot of the First World War, who, while politicians struggled with the idea of forming a territorial air force, proceeded to select members of the club to serve under him in the first squadron.”<sup>192</sup>

The evidence which has been collected is in part anecdotal and in part objective and will be presented in more detail in the next chapter. However, it suggests that during the 1930s men were recruited into the AAF on the basis of their social backgrounds.

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<sup>190</sup>

Tony Ross, *75 Eventful Years – A Tribute to the Royal Air Force 1918-1993*, (London 1993) p231.

<sup>191</sup>

Shores, *The Auxiliary Air Force in WWII*, p41.

<sup>192</sup>

Moulson, *The Flying Sword*, p15.



These qualities varied considerably across the country and depended in many cases upon the personal preferences of the commanding officer. For example “Johnnie Johnson, one of the RAF’s top fighter aces, remained convinced that he had failed to get into an AAF squadron when the interviewing officer discovered he was not a fox hunting man. On another AAF squadron there was always ‘a social test’ in which a prospective officer candidate would be given Sunday lunch and ‘several glasses of sherry’ to discover if his parlance was no longer that of a gentleman.”<sup>193</sup>

Whilst some common attributes were shared by everyone, others were more specifically linked to regions of the United Kingdom. Common trends show that many recruits for officer status were educated at public school followed by attendance at either Oxford or Cambridge University. Also, many of them took part in elite sporting activities such as rowing and motor car racing. Many worked in business, finance, law or had political interests. Lieutenant Colonel Dore, CO of 604 (County of Middlesex) Squadron noted that:

The intention was to ensure that 604 got the best material possible for its officer candidates, and this inevitably meant recruitment came from the upper echelons of 1930s society: the public schools, with Malvern being to the fore, the universities, Oxford and Cambridge, the legal profession, the Stock Exchange and the City. I gave each applicant marks for his school record in scholarship and athletics; and if he could

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<sup>193</sup>

Len Deighton, *Fighter. The true Story of the Battle of Britain*, (London, 1977) p44-45.

ride a horse, or drive a car or a motorcycle, or sail a boat, or ski or play the piano, I gave him extra marks.<sup>194</sup>

Anecdotal evidence suggests that political and aristocratic connections, coupled with a background in financial or legal institutions, were prerequisites to membership. Furthermore, the selection of the upper-middle classes, who had developed networks from either public school or university, meant that in many ways, volunteering for these squadrons was based primarily on family and social connections rather than technical skills. Another practical factor that played a significant part in the early recruitment of officers was the possession of a flying licence. All entrants to the AAF had to possess a flying licence, and flying was a very expensive hobby. Several recruits had their own aeroplanes, for example, in the case study squadron 608 (North Riding) Squadron, Geoffrey Shaw, Geoffrey Ambler and Keith Pyman all had their own aeroplanes.

Empire Air Days helped increase recruitment among the airmen, with the general public being able to come onto the aerodrome and see flying displays, watch the training lectures and see the engineers working on the squadron aircraft. Press coverage of these events helped to maintain a healthy interest in each local squadron and strengthen links between the aerodrome and the local community as well as to boost local support. Moreover, terms and conditions of enlistment

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Ian White, *If You Want Peace, Prepare For War. A History of No 604 (County of Middlesex) Squadron RAuxAF, in Peace and in War.* (London, 2005) p8-9.

were also printed in the local press and local buildings were often taken over to act as points of recruitment for the ground crew.

### The Merger of the five Special Reserve Squadrons into the Auxiliary Air Force

In 1927, Air Commander Hearson decided that the SR squadrons should be converted to AAF squadrons, but the Air Ministry felt that it was far too soon to be drawing this conclusion after only a years experience. The question was raised again in 1930 largely due to the fact that the lines of difference between the two reserve forces had become blurred resulting in the AAF beginning to train its pilots, and the SR beginning to accept trained pilots. Moreover, it had become apparent that the SR squadrons had struggled to recruit airmen due to the need for them to be skilled tradesmen, and as such, to remain within their trades. Many of the volunteers had been keener to train for new trades so that they were not just doing the same trade in both service and civilian life. Consequently, the SR squadrons appeared to function in the same way as AAF squadrons, but with a higher contingent of expensive regular servicemen.<sup>195</sup>

In 1935, the matter was discussed within the Air Ministry when it was noted by the Deputy Director Plans that “there is a marked tendency in SR squadrons for the regular and special reserve personnel to keep apart. The SR personnel

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<sup>195</sup>

Wing Commander Jeff Jefford, ‘Air Force Reserves 1912 to Munich’, in *Royal Air Force Reserve and Auxiliary Forces*, (Oxford, 2003) p21-22.

naturally feel that they can run their own show, and are not dependant on the regulars. The result is that the esprit de corps, so noticeable in auxiliary squadrons, is less apparent in the special reserve.”<sup>196</sup> Furthermore, Air Chief Marshal R Brooke-Popham recommended the merger noting that:

Special Reserve personnel are only available at weekends, i.e for 1½ days in a week, in the case of several squadrons, at the average weekend only about 20% of the Special Reserve personnel attend and owing to this irregular attendance, Special Reserve personnel seldom become sufficiently competent to have maintenance work wholly entrusted to them. Close supervision by regulars is essential if the safety of the flying personnel is to be considered. Moreover, annual cost for personnel in SR squadrons amounts to £16,000 as opposed to £10,000 for Auxiliary personnel. Consequently the merger of the SR squadrons into the AAF is recommended.<sup>197</sup>

A secret document in April 1935 from the Air Council entitled the future of the Special Reserve squadrons, points out that the original decision of 1923 to form two types of units embodying non-regular personnel, the SR and the AAF squadrons was taken in order that two alternative methods of development may be tried out simultaneously, there being no data then available to enable a

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<sup>196</sup>

TNA, AIR2/696, Re-organisation of Special Reserve squadrons as Auxiliary Air Force squadrons, “the future of the Special Reserve Squadrons”, 5<sup>th</sup> April 1935.

<sup>197</sup>

Ibid, p5.

judgement to be formed as to which type of unit would be likely to be the more effective and have the greater popular appeal. So successful, however, were the AAF considered to be after a year, it was decided to limit the number of SR squadrons to five and form eight squadrons of the AAF. Reasons given for and against the merger of the SR into the AAF are listed below:<sup>198</sup>

**Table 2 – To Maintain or Merge the Special Reserve Squadrons**

<b><u>TO MAINTAIN THE SPECIAL RESERVE SQUADRONS</u></b>	<b><u>TO MERGE THE SPECIAL RESERVE INTO THE AUXILIARY AIR FORCE</u></b>
By virtue of the substantial regular element within the squadron, this type of unit is definitely more efficient for war purposes than a squadron of the AAF. In particular, it is considered that AAF squadrons would need further training in bombing and armament work after the outbreak of war.	There is a greater <i>esprit de corps</i> in the AAF.
The success of the AAF squadrons has been mainly a question of their geographical location, which has accounted, in particular, for the great success of the squadrons formed in the neighbourhood of London. It is suggested that, where AAF squadrons have been formed in neighbourhoods less suitable from the recruiting point of view, their progress has been no better than the SR squadrons.	There is no doubt as to the great political popularity of the AAF squadrons. There are not sufficient funds at present to form additional squadrons of the AAF so the conversion of the five SR squadrons into AAF squadrons would be popular and politically advantageous.
	An AAF unit is somewhat cheaper than an SR unit.
	So long as the number of regular squadrons remains small, there is a strong case for retaining the SR squadrons in view of the military value of the regular flights.
	The conversion of the SR squadrons from night bombers into day bombers, removes one of the main difficulties which has in the past been mooted against changing these units into AAF.
	It might be possible to improve the bombing and armament training of the AAF squadrons,

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TNA, AIR2/696, Re-organisation of Special Reserve squadrons as Auxiliary Air Force squadrons, "the future of the Special Reserve Squadrons", 5<sup>th</sup> April 1935

	therefore removing the argument that they are less efficient for war.
	There is a shortage of regular personnel and converting the SR squadrons into AAF squadrons would release some regular personnel for utilisation in the new regular units to be formed under the government expansion scheme.
	The existence of two types of unit is anomalous – a point which has been raised by the Estimates Committee.
	Conversion into AAF squadrons would be of assistance in simplifying personnel administration and accelerating the flow of pilots through squadrons with a view to building up an AAF Reserve.
	The unit “belongs” to the volunteers and has accordingly a much stronger squadron spirit.
	An AAF unit fostered by the town or county has more local influence and atmosphere. In consequence the ground is better prepared for war recruiting on a squadron basis similar to that of the Territorial Army in 1914.
	The scheme is popular and there are now several applications for the formation of more AAF squadrons.

During 1936, the 5 Special Reserve squadrons, 500, 501, 502, 503 and 504, were merged into the Auxiliary Air Force, and the two reserves became one. The original five SR squadrons did keep their squadron numbers, even though all AAF squadron numbers were located in the 600 series.<sup>199</sup>

### Recruiting within the University Air Squadrons

The first UAS's were set up at Oxford and Cambridge Universities in 1925. Their aim was “to promote ‘air mindedness’ and to stimulate an interest in, and

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research into, matters aeronautical.”<sup>200</sup> Each squadron was staffed and funded by the Air Ministry, but membership involved no service obligations, members were not subject to The Air Force Act and they did not wear uniform. By 1931, a set of formal regulations were published in AP1401. This restricted membership to 75 in each squadron based on annual intakes of 25 for a three year degree course. It also specified the content of the Proficiency Certificate, which required attendance at annual camp, the accumulation of at least fifteen flying hours, three of which should be solo, and passing examinations in the theory of flight, rigging, engines, airmanship and airpilotage (navigation). The new aims of the UAS’s were ‘to encourage an interest in flying’ and to ‘assist those who might wish to join the RAF.’<sup>201</sup>

In Oxford, an aeroplane hangar was located at the headquarters in Manor Road, Holywell, The hangar contained a Bristol Fighter and a workshop hangar containing several aircraft engines, instruments and accessories. Instruction was given in the following categories: Aeroplane engines, the construction and rigging of aeroplanes, wireless telegraphy and telephony, air pilotage, aerial photography, armaments and aeroplane navigational instruments.

It is laid down that during term time there is to be no flying, but a fortnight is set aside during the “long vacation” during which the squadron will

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<sup>200</sup>

Margiotta, ‘University Air Squadrons in WWII,’ p67.

<sup>201</sup>

Margiotta, ‘University Air Squadrons in WWII,’ p67-68.

operate as a unit at a Service aerodrome. During this fortnight, a flight of instructional aeroplanes with flying instructors will be allocated to the squadron and additional facilities will be provided for members of the squadron by Service units on the station.<sup>202</sup>

The third UAS was opened at London University in 1935 and by then members were actively being encouraged to join the RAF or the RAFVR after 1936. In May 1939, the Military Training Act was introduced which meant that all young men aged between 20 and 21, including undergraduates, had to register for military service. This meant that there was a liability to be called up for a six month period of full time training, although this was never put into practice. Anyone who had signed up as a reservist prior to April was exempt from the period of military training. Recruitment to these UASs was by word of mouth, recruitment poster and fresher's fairs. The three UASs were disbanded once war was declared in 1939.

#### Recruiting within the Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve

As the need to recruit more reserve pilots increased, it became clear that the AAF was an unsuitable organisation to handle the vast number of reserve pilots who had to be recruited and trained. The idea of a Volunteer Reserve was developed in 1936. "Broadly the aim was to train 800 pilots a year in an organisation based not on the County Associations but on Town Centres situated

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<sup>202</sup>

*The Times*, March 6<sup>th</sup> 1926, p16.



in industrial areas. The necessary sites were acquired, the contracts with civil flying firms concluded, and the RAFVR came into being in April 1937.”<sup>203</sup> The educational requirements would be the same as those for a short service commission and applicants should have attended either a public or other secondary school with achievement up to the standard of the School Certificate of the Oxford and Cambridge Examination Board. This was a very broad requirement and meant that both part and full time study could be used to raise the applicant to the required level.<sup>204</sup>

Air Chief Marshal, Lord Tedder, intended that the RAFVR should not be connected to the County Associations to whom the AAF was connected and largely controlled. He intended to recruit from a wide range, including poorer secondary school boys as well as boys from the more expensive public schools, since these young men from contrasting social backgrounds would have to be able to work together both in the air and on the ground. Subsequently the idea was that the RAFVR would be more accessible to local people because regulations surrounding entry were less rigid. Members of the RAFVR did not need to be officers to fly, and it also allowed men without a trade to become serving members enabling them to train on entry. The decision to create the RAFVR was significant since:

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<sup>203</sup>

<sup>p78.</sup>  
<sup>204</sup>

Sir Maurice Dean, *The Royal Air Force and Two World Wars*, (London, 1979)

Dean, *The Royal Air Force*, p31.

In January 1938 the AAF was running at only 51% of its peacetime establishment of pilots and following a committee of enquiry chaired by Under Secretary of State, Harold Balfour, it was forced to begin – in the face of opposition from amongst its squadrons – to train some of its own non-commissioned ground and aircrew members as pilots to compensate for the shortfall of its officer numbers. Even so, it entered the war still seriously below its established strength.<sup>205</sup>

By 1939, there were approximately five thousand RAFVR pilots. Combined with the AAF the two reserve forces made up a large pool of pilots and airmen who would be ready to fight if war broke out. By the outbreak of the Second World War, the RAF had a valuable reservoir of sixty-three thousand men trained as pilots as well as in medical and technical trades.<sup>206</sup>

At the start of 1939, RAF strength stood at 135 squadrons, and in addition to this, the AAF comprised 19 squadrons.<sup>207</sup> In August 1939 members of the AAF and RAFVR were embodied into the RAF, and all new recruitment into the RAF was through the RAFVR. There were twenty-one Auxiliary Air Force squadrons at the outbreak of war, fourteen squadrons who were fighter units, four squadrons who operated under

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<sup>205</sup>

Tony Mansell, 'The Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve 1936-1939' in *RAF Reserve and Auxiliary Forces*, (Oxford, 2003) p32.

<sup>206</sup>

Wing Commander Alex Dickson, *The Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve - Memories, RAF Innsworth (Gloucester, 1997)* p24.

<sup>207</sup>

John D R Rawlings, *The History of the Royal Air Force*, (Feltham, 1984) p 87.

the control of Coastal Command and two squadrons whose duties were army co-operation. At this time the AAF was at its most pure. In other words it was made up of complete volunteers who were all tied to the squadron's locality. Once the war began, each AAF squadron was merged into the RAF and began to fill up with members of the RAF and RAFVR, as well as their original members being posted on to different squadrons.

Overall, the reserve forces of the RAF began with two types, the auxiliaries and the SR's, and ended with only one, the AAF. The SR squadrons had merged with the AAF prior to World War Two, and the AAF had been amalgamated into the RAF in 1939 when war broke out. The RAFVR also became part of the RAF proper as the war progressed and the men who served within either branch of the reserves became full time RAF personnel for the duration of the war. In fact, the only interest that their original part time status held was in terms of their local appeal and interest. As the war developed, the local press often commented on the exploits of former AAF members and charted their careers, as the squadrons became diluted by regular RAF personnel and pilots from overseas. Furthermore, the recruitment processes for the AAF changed after World War II due largely to the growth of technical skills which were required to fly and maintain aircraft and the knowledge required to fulfil these tasks required greater education.

### **Voluntary activity**

Voluntary activity within the reserve forces is also an area that has been neglected by historians, and one of the themes of the thesis is the importance of voluntarism

within the AAF in a period when the state continued to rely upon private individuals to play a crucial role in the defence of the nation. Many squadrons ran an active social programme and some took on the characteristics of socially exclusive clubs like the Royal Aero Club.<sup>208</sup> Indeed, the AAF needs to be seen in the context of changes in voluntary social activity during the inter war period when a wide range of new clubs were being created for young men, including Toc H, a voluntary organisation with Christian values, formed in Belgium in 1927<sup>209</sup> and the Round Table, a professional voluntary organisation which was set up in Norwich in 1927, for young men between the ages of 18 and 45.<sup>210</sup> Members of these voluntary groups, including the AAF, were drawn in large part from aristocratic, gentry and bourgeois families in the region and can be seen as part of a long tradition in which social, cultural and political links were constantly being forged between traditional landed society and an emerging middle class culture. It has long been recognised, for example, that the younger sons of landed and aristocratic families entered the Law, the Church, the Army and commerce and this meant that the deep divides that often characterised social relations in many European societies rarely characterised the British class system. These familial networks linking land, commerce and the professions were buttressed later in the nineteenth century by public schools and universities which helped forge a new elite culture made up of members from both

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<sup>208</sup>

Tony Mansell, 'Flying Start: Educational and Social Factors in the Recruitment of Pilots of the Royal Air Force in the inter-war years,' *History of Education*, Volume 26, No 1, 1997, pp71-90.

<sup>209</sup>

P B Clayton, MC, FSA, *Tales of Talbot House: Everyman's Club in Poperinghe & Ypres 1915-1918*, (London, 1919) pvii.

<sup>210</sup>

The Round Table, *About us*, p1. Available at: [www.roundtable.co.uk/about.php](http://www.roundtable.co.uk/about.php). Viewed on 11th April 2016.

upper and middle class society.<sup>211</sup> In keeping with Rotary Clubs and other elite voluntary groups, the auxiliary squadrons attracted members from upper and middle-class society who came from this new elite culture and played an important role in maintaining that culture. This is particularly apparent in 600 and 601 Squadrons; but do we see a similar pattern in provincial squadrons like 608 Squadron?

Voluntarism certainly played a significant role in national life but was fundamentally rooted in specific regional and local contexts, and it is here that a military tradition of voluntarism was most deeply rooted. There is a long tradition in British society that mistrusts standing armies, seeing them as dangerous forces that might be foisted on a nation and used to oppress it. In place of the standing army, it has celebrated the virtues of a citizen army made up of volunteer units recruited and operating in specific localities, willing and able to defend their families and communities when the need arose. The ideal of the citizen army was an expression of community solidarity, recruited from a local population, taking its identity from a particular region and enjoying – at least in theory – a close and almost organic relationship with that community. The AAF was formed according to the ideals of this enduring tradition and one of the themes to be explored in this study is how a specific AAF squadron – 608 (NR) Squadron based in Thornaby – interacted with its surrounding community.

## **Conclusion**

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211

A J Reid, *Social Classes and Social Relations in Britain 1850-1914* (Basingstoke, 1992) p173.

The key focus of the chapter therefore was the way in which men joined the AAF, SR and RAFVR. The chapter has also looked at what kinds of men were selected as officers and also what influence social class had upon recruitment. Therefore, men joining the SR applied directly to their local squadron. Here those men who wanted to fly were trained and those who wanted to become airmen had to be skilled tradesmen. Men joining the AAF were recruited through the local Territorial and Auxiliary Air Force Association, those men wanting to become pilots had to already be able to fly, whilst those wanting to become airmen could select any trade and they were given skilled training. Men volunteering for the RAFVR had to be educated up to School Certificate, and were enlisted as airmen before being promoted to sergeants when they began their flying training at civilian flying schools.

Recruitment into the SR was largely based upon someone knowing somebody suitable, whilst recruitment into the AAF was based on background and suitability with the interview process taking on a social test as well. In theory, those joining the RAFVR would face no social barriers, as background and status were not to be obstacles to enlistment. This chapter has analysed the ideal way to be recruited into one of these three organisations. The question that the next chapter will answer will be, does the research support the current literature which suggests that the AAF was a gentleman's flying club and the RAFVR a citizen's air force?

## **Chapter 3**

### **The Social Composition of the Territorial Air Force Prior to 1939**

#### **Introduction**

This chapter will examine the social composition of the Territorial Air Force (TAF). The prevailing thesis is that the Auxiliary Air Force (AAF) was a “gentleman’s flying club”, and that it was so rigid in its recruitment processes, that there were never enough men to fulfil its needs. Subsequently, a new reserve, the Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve (RAFVR), was then developed to remove the social and class barriers to recruitment which those choosing to enter the AAF faced by creating what

was to be a “citizen’s air force.” Analysing the data in this chapter will allow these assumptions to be tested.

This chapter contains all of the research data in the form of both discussion, and in the form of tables and bar charts. The data was collected over a five year period. The research began by using the *London Gazette* to identify all men within the AAF, (including those of the five SR Squadrons which were merged into the AAF in 1936) who were commissioned between the years of 1925 and 1939. Once each squadron had been identified, its members were listed together with the date of their commission. Each squadron and each individual name was then cross-referenced with The Times Digital Archive. This gives a list of all of the news articles featuring the individual’s name. Each newspaper article was then read to retrieve any biographical information about the newly commissioned officer. Ten categories were selected by the author as representing the activities of a young man from a specifically high or middle class group. The categories selected were as follows:

- (i) Attending a public school
- (ii) Attending Oxford or Cambridge University
- (iii) Attending any other university
- (iv) Taking part in elite sport – defined as rowing, yachting, fencing, horse riding/hunting, shooting, archery.
- (v) Marriage announcement in *The Times*
- (vi) Birth announcement in *The Times*
- (vii) Death announcement in *The Times*
- (viii) Profession, business or industry



- (ix) Family business
- (x) University Air Squadron (UAS)

It was decided that these nine categories could be measured and could be used to suggest the social status of a young officer recruit. Moreover, these categories could in fact be used to measure status across the civilian population during this period too. A Google search of the man's full name was also undertaken which threw up individual squadron web pages as well as the Commonwealth Graves Commission and the research of other individuals. Finally squadron histories were also used to try to find out biographical information about all of the men who had been identified. This method of identifying men and then discovering their own individual information was used across the AAF and the RAFVR. All of the individual officers' data, as well as the tables and the bar charts are located in Appendix One. This chapter, along with Chapter 5, will help to provide an answer to the third research question, which asks whether the TAF squadrons across the United Kingdom were different according to region. It will also go some way to decide whether or not the experiences, social make-up and exploits of the two London squadrons, to whom most of the literature pertains, were mirrored by other squadrons and in particular, the case study squadron, across the United Kingdom.

When looking at the social composition of the TAF, it is important to distinguish between the AAF, which was made up of the AAF and the five squadrons of the SR, which had been merged into the AAF in 1936, and the RAFVR, which was created in 1936 to cope with the recruiting problems of the AAF. Indeed Ian White in his history of 604 (County of Middlesex) Squadron noted that:

The Air Force reserves underwent significant changes in 1936. Experience with the Special Reserve and AAF units had shown that in terms of economy, recruiting success, professional standards, morale and popularity, the auxiliary squadrons out performed those of the Special Reserve. The AAF was less expensive to operate due to it having fewer regulars in its establishment, recruitment was easier as there were fewer constraints on the volunteers, professional standards were regarded as being higher, morale was also higher because each squadron was seen to belong to its members and in terms of popularity, several County Territorial Associations were keen to establish more.<sup>212</sup>

The chapter is divided into two sections so that the differences between the social composition of the AAF and the RAFVR, can be identified. There is a detailed case study of 608 (North Riding) Squadron to work out whether or not more localised AAF squadrons were made up of young men from similar backgrounds as those from the more well-known 600 and 601 Squadrons.

### **The Auxiliary Air Force and Special Reserves**

Available literature surrounding the AAF focuses on the experiences and composition of 600 and 601 Squadron, located in London, and presents an image of the pre-war AAF as a “gentleman’s flying club.” This research has found biographical

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<sup>212</sup>

White, *If you want peace, prepare for war*, p97.

information for a significant number of men who were enlisted as AAF and SR officers.

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**Table 3 - Auxiliary Air Force and Special Reserve Initial Data**

<b><u>SQUADRON NUMBER</u></b>	<b><u>TOTAL OF IDENTIFIED MEN</u></b>	<b><u>TOTAL MEN WITH BIOGRAPHIES</u></b>	<b><u>PERCENTAGE %</u></b>
600	69	26	38
601	72	44	61
602	40	23	58
603	45	38	84
604	38	13	34
605	52	8	15
607	25	11	44
608	32	20	63

609	20	15	75
610	17	11	65
611	18	11	61
612	20	11	55
613	5	3	60
614	19	12	63
615	17	10	59
616	5	4	80
500	27	15	56
501	17	7	41
502	17	13	76
503	8	4	50
504	22	17	77
<b><u>TOTAL</u></b>	<b><u>585</u></b>	<b><u>316</u></b>	<b><u>55</u></b>

Many of the young men who were approached by newly formed squadron Commanding Officers were from similar backgrounds, and these men often knew each other from their school days, or through their own family connections. This becomes apparent when each individual squadron is studied separately. For the purpose of the research, the AAF squadrons within the United Kingdom will be considered as well as the five squadrons who started out as SR until 1936, when all SR squadrons were transferred into the AAF. Where possible, the backgrounds of the pre-war officers are presented and then contrasted to the backgrounds of the post-war officers to assess the degree of difference in recruitment procedures and social composition. Is there evidence of a shift from a social elite to a more technocratic and democratic organisation following the impact of Second World War? Are there regional variations in the social backgrounds of officer elites?

Detailed information on the backgrounds of officers recruited to join some of the auxiliary squadrons is often lacking, due primarily to the lack of existing detailed research on these squadrons. Furthermore, it has been virtually impossible to trace the backgrounds of those men who served in AAF squadrons who were not officers. All of the Squadron Associations have been contacted and supporting information has been used to help clarify the picture. Where information has been located there has been more of it available for officers than airmen.

Much of the evidence suggests that during the 1930s men were recruited into the Auxiliary Air Force on the basis of their social backgrounds. These qualities varied considerably across the country and depended in many cases upon the personal preferences of the commanding officer. Whilst some common attributes were shared by everyone, others were more specifically linked to regions of the UK, providing an insight into the contrasting business and industrial interests of the regions as well as between the metropolis and the provinces.

Mansell<sup>213</sup> in discussing the pre-war Auxiliary's notes:

the Auxiliaries represented *par excellence* that powerful amateur tradition which characterised so much of British life before the war...to be an Auxiliary, it was essential to be the right person from the right background. The expense of the Auxiliary lifestyle saw to that if nothing

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213

Dr A Mansell, 'Professionals, Amateurs and Private Armies. Pilot Entry Portals in the RAF Expansion of 1934 to 1939' *Proceedings of the RAF Historical Society Number 11*, (1993) pp60-61.

else did....The AAF was reluctant to sacrifice its exclusive character to serve wider interests.<sup>214</sup>

### **Southern Squadrons**

The two London squadrons form the basis upon which most historians have made judgements about the AAF 600 (City of London) Squadron was formed on 15<sup>th</sup> October 1925 at Northolt, before moving to Hendon in 1926; it was affiliated to the City of London Territorial Association, and most of its members worked in the City at Lloyds, the Stock Exchange, or in other financial firms and legal institutions. Hans Onderwater suggests that they considered flying to be the young gentleman's new pleasure and the sky his new hunting ground.<sup>215</sup> *The Times* in 1929 noted that "this City of London Squadron is largely recruited from the men of London who are engaged in banks, big business houses and offices, and the fact that it has reached its present efficiency is a notable testimony to their keenness and intelligence."<sup>216</sup>

There was a great deal of publicity surrounding the creation of the new squadron and articles in the national press helped with recruiting. The first Adjutant and Flying Instructor of the squadron was The Hon James H B Rodney MC, considered by the Commanding Officer (CO) to be "the right man". Several of the young men who were recruited as officer pilots for 600 Squadron had similar backgrounds and biographical information which pertains to each individual officer is located in Appendix 1. Freddie

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<sup>214</sup>

Ibid, pp 60-61.

<sup>215</sup>

Hans Onderwater, *Gentlemen in Blue. 600 Squadron*, (Barnsley, 1997), p43.

<sup>216</sup>

*The Times*, August 9<sup>th</sup> 1929, p6.

Guest, Roger Nathaniel Frankland, Robert Francis Gore Lea, Anthony Henry Hamilton Tollemache and George Dawson Damer had family links to the aristocracy. Many of the young men had been to public schools such as Eton or Winchester, and then moved on to either Oxford or Cambridge including Anthony Henry Tollemache, Samuel Charles Elworthy, and Edward Colbeck-Welch. Some had political interests; for example, Freddie Guest was a Liberal Party MP and Lord Lloyd of Dolbran was MP for West Staffordshire. Many of the men had elite sporting interests such as motorcar racing, athletics, skiing and rowing. Others worked in the City such as Charles Gambier Jenyns, who worked at the Stock Exchange, or Ralph Hiscox who worked at Lloyds, or Samuel Charles Elworthy who worked in the legal profession.

Summer camp was considered to be the highlight of the auxiliary officers' life, two weeks of constant flying and camaraderie; in 1932, 600 Squadrons annual camp was at Tangmere. One requirement of summer camp was that although men were allowed to wear plain civilian clothes off duty, the wearing of hats remained compulsory:

It was a regrettable fact that the well-dressed citizen airman off duty might have possessed only a bowler and that this hat would take a lot of space in the issue kit. Pretty soon the Squadron cricket team had been persuaded to hand over their caps for the common good and in no time a system was organised whereby a gent in plus fours and cricket cap would clock out of the guard room and pass his hat back through a hole in the hedge.<sup>217</sup>

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217

High jinks were also apparent at the camp, particularly at the end of a day's work when the officers would head down to Bognor.

The famous Mr Butlin had even then a fun fair at Bognor, and it is a fact that an undeclared state of war existed between his attendants and 600 Squadron. Butlin's was subjected to a series of sporadic but highly co-ordinated raids for the express purpose of capturing the current collector arms of the Dodgems, in effect, the enemy's colours. Surprise was the order of the day, one moment of relative peace, the next thing a grand melee with protagonists locked in battle on individual Dodgems.<sup>218</sup>

"The Millionaires Mob", otherwise known as 601 (County of London) Squadron was born in White's Club, St James's, W1, the idea of Lord Edward Grosvenor who very much wanted to create a civilian air force. It was formed on 14<sup>th</sup> October 1925, and based at Northolt, before moving to Hendon. Grosvenor chose his officers from gentlemen who themselves had confidence and the right social background to ensure that they were not over-awed by him.<sup>219</sup> As in 600 Squadron, this confidence and social background often came from men who had been educated in private schools such as Eton and then moved on to Oxford or Cambridge. Grosvenor enjoyed eating, drinking and White's Club, an exclusive gentleman's club in the St James area of London. On the whole he preferred potential officers who would fit

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<sup>218</sup>

Ibid, p44.

<sup>219</sup>

Tom Moulson, *The Flying Sword. The Story of 601 Squadron*, (London, 1964) p11.



naturally into the setting of White's. He liked to see initially whether their social training had equipped them to deal with the large glasses of port he would pour for them at his Eaton Square home, and if they responded satisfactorily he would take them to White's for even larger gins.<sup>220</sup>

Following Grosvenor's death in 1929, the new Commanding Officer of 601 Squadron was Sir Philip Sassoon, a man with family connections to the aristocracy and a political career. Other members included Edward Bulwer-Lytton, - Viscount Knebworth, Max Aitken who was the son of Lord Beaverbrook and Henry Norman, the son of Sir Hendry Norman; Peter Clive, the son of Sir Robert Clive, Nigel Seely, son of Sir Charles Seely, Robert Forbes-Leith, the son of Sir Charles and Lady Forbes-Leith of Fyvie Castle. Other links to the aristocracy came from Stanley Beresford-Collett, Richard Stephen Demetriadi, Robert Arthur Grosvenor, Edward Ward and William Drogo Sturges Montagu. Roger Joyce Bushell who along with Max Aitken, Carl Davis, Edward Whitehead Reid, Guy Rawston Branch and Edward Bulwer-Lytton had attended Cambridge University and public school. All these men were keen athletes, skiers and members of the university rugby, soccer and golf clubs; Aiden Crawley and Michael Peacock had both been to Winchester and then Oxford University, and shared a passion for skiing and cricket, while Willard Whitney Straight was a millionaire racing driver. Legal backgrounds were common with Roger Bushell, James Hayward Little, Robert Forbes-Leith and Michael Peacock all acting as barristers or solicitors; whilst other members of the squadron had interests in aviation, such as Henry St Valery Norman.

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220

Ibid, p22.

The social status of the kind of gentlemen who joined the Squadron in the late 1920s and early 1930s meant that there was pressure to personalise their AAF uniform to reflect their positions. Subsequently, many of the officers ensured that their uniform jackets were lined with red silk, to set them apart from other Auxiliary squadrons, and many wore red socks or red scarves<sup>221</sup>. This helped gain the squadron its characteristic notoriety, and their exclusivity was even known to the Germans who saw the squadron partly as a voluntary cohort of patriotic aristocrats (which they admired) and also as a bunch of flippant pleasure-seekers (which they deplored).<sup>222</sup> The social activities of the officers from 601 Squadron reflected the hedonistic nature of the young, rich aristocrats and their desire to be seen fulfilling their patriotic duty by volunteering to serve their country whilst still enjoying a light-hearted, somewhat daredevil approach to the job, an image which they were more than happy to convey.

Indeed, games played within the officers' mess were known to further stimulate the rivalry between the two London squadrons, who were both based at Hendon and subsequently shared the same officers' mess:

the rivalry between 600 and 601, both of whom were commanded by Right Honourables 'Freddy' Guest and Philip Sassoon, was intense. Known collectively as the 'Berkley Boys' in deference to the black and

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<sup>221</sup>

Moulson, *The Flying Sword*, p67.

<sup>222</sup>

Ibid, p67.

light blue old school tie of Eton attributed to many of the squadrons' officers, the two London Auxiliary Squadron's behaviour in the Hendon Officer's Mess was described as 'bloody.'<sup>223</sup>

The squadron continued to attract young men, "they came in their own small aircraft, sometimes literally held together by string and sticking plaster, to fly bombers at Northolt each weekend."<sup>224</sup> Len Deighton confirms their connections with the city:

At the outbreak of war the "millionaires" were so concerned about the prospect of petrol rationing and how it would affect their private transport, an officer was assigned to the task of buying petrol. He came back having bought a service station but announced that the pumps there were only half-full. This situation was remedied when another pilot remembered that he was a director of Shell. His secretary arranged a delivery.<sup>225</sup>

It is apparent that political and aristocratic connections, coupled with a background in financial or legal institutions, were prerequisites to membership. The selection of the upper middle class, who had developed networks from either public school or university, meant that in many ways, volunteering for these squadrons was based

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<sup>223</sup>

White, *If you want Peace, Prepare for War*, p6.

<sup>224</sup>

Moulson, *The Flying Sword*, p68.

<sup>225</sup>

Len Deighton, *Fighter The True Story of the Battle of Britain*, (London,1977), p44.

primarily on family and social connections rather than technical skills. However it is also clear that these gentlemen were not simply playboys but also had responsibility for managing staff; Roger Joyce Bushell, for example, was a lawyer; Henry Norman was an architect; Edward Bulwer-Lytton worked for the *Daily Mail*, Raymond Davis was an engineer and Max Aitken was manager of the *Sunday Express*; Stanley Beresford Collett worked as Assistant Company Secretary of Great Western Railways, whilst Edward Whitehead Reid was a doctor and Simon Gilliat was a stock and share broker. In many ways, they were ideal candidates for officers within a voluntary military hierarchy. They had been educated, in the main, within the public school sector and had been groomed to fulfil leadership roles.

Of the 141 identified officers attached to these two well-publicised squadrons, 70 have been found using a range of available records, including 77 references from *The Times*, 7 references from Peerage Records and 16 references from miscellaneous websites. No records could be located for the remaining 71 officers, representing 50% of the total. The records rarely followed a predictable structure or form: sometimes family backgrounds of officers would be given, sometimes not; often there would be details of educational backgrounds, but not always; mention of sporting activities might or might not be included, and so on.

The officers who could be tracked in this fashion together with the impressionistic nature of the information, poses problems in terms of building a typical social profile of AAF officers in these elite squadrons. However, for all their limitations, these new

records do provide interesting and significant insights into the social world of the AAF.

Data for 600 and 601 Squadron combined:

141 officers were identified of which there were 70 biographies. This means that the percentage of officers with biographies is 49%.

**Table 4 - 600 & 601 Squadron combined data by category**

<b><u>Category</u></b>	<b><u>Total</u></b>	<b><u>Percentage of Men with Biographies</u></b>
<b>Public School</b>	24	34%
<b>Oxbridge</b>	23	33%
<b>University</b>	5	7%

<b>Elite Sport</b>	13	19%
<b>Marriage</b>	12	17%
<b>Announcement</b>		
<b>Birth Announcement</b>	4	6%
<b>Death Announcement</b>	23	33%
<b>Profession</b>	32	46%
<b>Family Business</b>	3	4%
<b>University</b>	2	3%
<b>Air Squadron</b>		

Of the 70 available records, at least 21 or 47% make specific reference to titled backgrounds and this figure, like most figures that can be derived from such a methodology, is almost certain to be an underestimate. Where educational backgrounds are mentioned, almost all refer to a classic trajectory of public schools (Eton, Winchester, Harrow, Westminster) leading to Oxbridge colleges, with a significant weighting towards Cambridge rather than Oxford. The relatively large number of references in *The Times* – usually in the form of marriage and engagement announcements or obituaries – carries its own social significance.

The occupations of these men offer a predictable profile: 18% of them were engaged in Law; over 25% in the City (the stock exchange; Lloyds Insurance; large national companies); at least 5 in the national media; 6 were actively engaged in national politics, and 3 occupied important posts in government. Whenever leisure activities

were mentioned, they invariably included the mix of elite activities including private flying, racing, racing-car driving, polo, big-game hunting, rowing, cricket, fencing, yachting, golf, rackets and skiing.

Other southern squadrons included 604 (County of Middlesex) Squadron, formed on 17<sup>th</sup> March 1930 at Hendon. Its CO was Lieutenant Colonel A.S.W. Dore, DSO, TD, a former soldier in the Worcester Regiment who had transferred to the Royal Flying Corps in 1917. His concerns on being approached to set up the new squadron reveal much about his social background: "Was it fair to my family? I should have to give up much of my leisure, my holidays, my golf and tennis at weekends."<sup>226</sup> However, the fact that Dore accepted the job suggests that ideals of voluntarism were very much alive in the context of the 1920s. It was his job to select the officers who would serve within his new squadron. His selection techniques mirrored those of Grosvenor in that "I gave each applicant marks for his school record in scholarship and athletics; and if he could ride a horse, or drive a car or motorcycle, or sail a boat, or ski or play the piano I gave him more marks."<sup>227</sup>

Officer candidates for 604 squadron included Roderick Aeneas Chisholm, who was educated at Ampleforth College and then worked in the oil industry prior to joining the AAF in 1935, John Cherry, the son of Sir Benjamin Cherry, John Davies, son of Colonel Sir Alfred Davies, Alan Loader Maffey, son of John Loader Maffey, Lord Rugby; Edward Prescott, son of Lieutenant Colonel Prescott and Michael Montagu,

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<sup>226</sup>

<sup>227</sup> White, *A History of No 604 (County of Middlesex) Squadron RAuxAF*. p6.

White, *A History of No 604 (County of Middlesex) Squadron RAuxAF*, p8.

the stepson of Lord Kimberley, who worked as a post office engineer. Philip Wheeler was educated at Uppingham and New College, Oxford, with a background in point-to-point racing, whilst Philip Lawton was educated at Westminster School and was a lawyer. Finally, Robert Nimmo was a stockbroker. Other young officers often had their marriages announced in *The Times* which reflected their upper class or upper middle class status.

On 1<sup>st</sup> December 1932, 604 Squadron won the Esher Trophy for Auxiliary Efficiency and their behaviour in the mess mirrored that of 600 and 601 squadron:

we were sitting in the Mess when Air Commodore McNeece Foster, commanding the Auxiliary Group – who by his keenness and personal knowledge of almost every auxiliary officer, led us on to greater effort – telephoned the good news and his congratulations. There was a whoop of joy from the boys. I ordered half a dozen Veuve Clicquot and when I left, discreetly, the celebrations had reached the stage of nose-diving over the sofas and chairs.<sup>228</sup>

Out of the 10 identified officers for 604 Squadron, 60% attended public school, and 40% of those attending public school went on to Oxford or Cambridge University. Furthermore, 30% of the officer recruits went on to work in professional jobs

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228

White, *A History of No 604 (County of Middlesex) Squadron RAuxAF*, p18.



compared to no recruits working in family businesses. 30% of them had their engagement or marriage printed in *The Times*.

605 (County of Warwick) were formed on 5<sup>th</sup> October 1926 at Castle Bromwich, Birmingham. Aristocratic links for officer personnel were not as apparent as those personnel that were associated with 600 and 601 Squadrons, but other candidate had similar backgrounds in terms of public schools, elite sports and business connections. For example, Ralph Hope was educated at Eton and New College, Oxford, an outstanding oarsman and the nephew of Neville Chamberlain; Baron Willoughby de Broke was a member of a hunting family<sup>229</sup>, whilst Ron Noble was the son of an army officer who worked for Cornhill Insurance; Christopher Currant was the son of a hatter and worked in research and development in the engineering industry and Walter Barnaby was a building contractor from Wolverhampton. Like many officers in 600 and 601, Nigel Stuart Graeme was sufficiently important to have his marriage announced in *The Times*. There was still a recognisably elite culture at work here, but with its own distinctive provincial character compared to the well-publicised London squadrons. Engineering and building occupations, for example, tended to characterise provincial squadrons as opposed to the financial, legal and media occupations of many officers in London.

52 officers were identified for 605 Squadron, and 8 officers had biographies. 38% of them had attended public school and 13% of them had gone on to Oxford or

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229

*The Times*, September 18<sup>th</sup> 1926, p5.

Cambridge University. Furthermore, 50% of them worked in professional jobs compared to 13% who worked within family businesses.

610 (County of Chester) Squadron was formed at in 1936 at Hooton Park, “most of the pilots took private flying lessons to qualify. One person said never have I seen so many Rolls Royce cars in one spot at the same time – an indication of the pilots’ social status.”<sup>230</sup> Some of its members included Gerald Kerr, who had been educated at Leeds Grammar School and won an Eldon Scholarship at Oxford for Natural Sciences in 1927. Mark Topham was a director of Tophams Ltd from Liverpool who managed Aintree Racecourse; William Cromwell Warner was the son of Sir Lionel Warner and Graham Lambert Chambers studied at Cambridge University. Several of its members warranted marriage announcements in *The Times*; for example, Douglas Strachan Wilson, Charles Ross Pritchard and Allan Graham

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Further away from London, there is a marked decrease in the number of men who can be identified, and who also follow the same educational route as many recruits of 600/601 Squadron. For 610 Squadron, of the 11 officers with biographies, 11% went to public school, however 22% went to Oxford or Cambridge University. Similarly, 22% of the men had their engagement or marriage mentioned in *the Times* newspaper.

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Deighton, *Fighter*, p40.

614 (County of Glamorgan) Squadron was formed on 1st June 1937 at Llandow in Wales. 19 officers who were commissioned to 614 Squadron have been identified, and of these 19, some background information has been found for 12, which equates to 63%. Martin Llewellyn Edwards and Norman Stuart Merrett were educated at Marlborough College and Clifton College respectively, whilst Martin Llewellyn Edwards also attended Lincoln College, Oxford University. He also had a marriage announcement in *the Times*, as did Phillip Michael Vaughan Lysaght, and John Dudley Rollinson, whilst Richard Edward Charles Cadman, Richard Owen Rhys and Phillip Michael Vaughan Lysaght had their children's births recorded in *the Times*. Martin Llewellyn Edwards was a solicitor and Alexander Glen Pallot was an accountant. Finally Norman Stuart Merrett played Rugby and also international hockey.

Of the 19 officers identified for 614 Squadron, short biographies were found on 12 of them which equates to 63%. Of these young men, 16% attended public school, for example Martin Llewellyn Edwards attended Marlborough College, and only Martin Llewellyn Edwards attended Lincoln College, Oxford University. 16% of the men worked as lawyers and Alexander Glen Pallot was an accountant. 8% took part in some sort of sport, for example, Norman Stuart Merrett played rugby and international hockey. Furthermore, 16% had their engagements announced in *the Times* and also the birth of their children, for example, Richard Owen Rhys.

Another southern squadron was 615 (County of Surrey), formed on 1<sup>st</sup> June 1937 at RAF Kenley. Again aristocratic links can be identified with candidates for pilot

training; for example, John Gayner, the son of Dr Gayner, and John Lloyd, son of Lt Col Sir John and Lady Lloyd of Dinnas. But mixed in among these elite families were one or two other men who had more modest backgrounds such as Bernard Brady, who left school at fourteen and joined the Royal Navy as an able seaman, eventually training as a pilot with the Royal Flying Corps. He set up his own business as manager of Aircraft Exchange and Mart located at Hanworth Air Park in Middlesex. Between Brady and the more middle-class recruits, there was Anthony Eyre, son of Mr G W B Eyre of Purley, educated at Whitgift School in Croydon and Walter Stern who worked for the London Metal Exchange. Again, several young pilots had their marriages announced in *The Times*; for example, John Richard Hensman Gayner, Peter F Cazenove and Anthony Eyre.

In percentage terms, 8 men were identified for 615 Squadron, of which 13% of them went to public school, whilst none of them went on to Oxford or Cambridge University. Moreover, 25% of the officer recruits worked in professional jobs and none worked in family businesses. However 38% of the men had their engagement or marriage announced in *the Times*, and 25% of these men also had the birth of their children announced in *the Times*.

500 (County of Kent) Squadron was formed at RAF Manston on 15<sup>th</sup> March 1931 as a Special Reserve Squadron. Officer recruits included Stanley Dudley Pierce Connors, personal assistant to Air Commodore J C Quinnell, and several young men whose backgrounds are revealed in marriage notices published in *The Times*, for example, Arthur Cousins, son of Lieutenant-Colonel Cousins of Bix Manor, Henley

on Thames, Charles Elgar, son of Walter Robinson Elgar, JP, William Heath Corry, son of Mr and Mrs H W Corry of Yaldham Manor, Kemsing and George Geoffrey Stockdale, son of Mr and Mrs G Holmes Stockdale.

Of those officers with biographies none of the officer recruits went to public school, or went on to Oxford or Cambridge University, but 8% of them worked in a professional job, compared to none working in family businesses, and 73% of them had engagement or marriage announcements in the *Times*.

501 (County of Gloucester) Squadron was formed at Filton on 14<sup>th</sup> June 1929 as a Special Reserve Squadron. Many of the first officer candidates also had their marriage notices announced in *The Times*, for example, Cautley Nasmyth Shaw, son of Oliphant Shaw of Woorwyrite, Victoria, Australia, John Anthony Warren, a test pilot; and Camille Enright Malfroy, son of Mr and Mrs C M Malfroy of Wellington, New Zealand. Of the 7 identified officers with biographies, 49% of them worked within the professions and 29% had their engagements or marriages announced in the *Times*.

503 (County of Lincoln) Squadron was formed at Waddington on 5<sup>th</sup> October 1926, and initial recruits included John Bell, educated at Charterhouse and Christ's College Cambridge, the son of Mr and Mrs H A Bell of Lindum, and Robert Higson Smith. Of the officers who were identified with biographies, both went to public school and then on to either Oxford or Cambridge University.

504 (County of Nottingham) Squadron was formed at Hucknall on 26<sup>th</sup> March 1928. Officer candidates included Philip Parsons, educated at Charterhouse and Downing College, Cambridge, who worked for Rolls-Royce Limited as an engineering pupil. Other young men who joined the squadron had their prospective marriages announced in *The Times*, for example, Gilbert Darwin, son of Colonel Charles Waring Darwin, CB of Elston Hall, Newark; Rupert Hartley Watson, son of Lieutenant-Colonel and Mrs G Hartley Watson of Powderham near Exeter; Reginald Broadhead, a property dealer from Ockwells Manor, Maidenhead, Michael Rook, son of Colonel and Mrs W R Rood of Edwalton House and Sir Hugh Michael Seely Bart MP, the son of Sir Charles Seely, MP for East Norfolk and High Sheriff of Nottinghamshire. Consequently of the 15 officers with biographies, 6% went to public school and 5% of them went on to Oxford or Cambridge University. 13% of the recruits worked within the professions and a further 13% had either their engagement or marriage announced in *the Times*.

When the Southern squadrons are considered as a whole, it is apparent that 600 and 601 squadron represented men with aristocratic or upper middle class backgrounds, who had attended the same public schools and universities whereas, 604, 605 and 615 squadrons recruited men from a wider spectrum of upper and middle class society.

Of the 368 officers identified who served in Southern AAF squadrons during the 1930s, background information has been found on 49% or 180 of the men. These officers have been identified using press, oral testimony and AAF records. Generally over 61% worked in financial or legal institutions and in public companies with only

9% working in family businesses. They tended to be prominent within their local community and over 39% of them had been educated at public school, followed by either Oxford or Cambridge University. It also becomes evident that many of them had forged friendships and social networks in elite athletic clubs ranging from cricket and golf through to rowing and yachting, with over 16% of the available records mentioning some form of sporting prowess. It is also apparent that the southern squadrons which are further away from London, the number of officers with biographies falls, as does the percentage of men attending public school or an Oxbridge University. This must be taken into account because the less officers identified with biographies, the higher the percentage will be for each of the categories:

**Table 5 - Auxiliary Air Force and Special Reserve southern squadrons showing percentages of men with biographies**

<b><u>Squadron</u></b>	<b><u>Number of</u></b>	<b><u>Number of Men</u></b>	<b><u>% of Men With</u></b>
<b><u>Number</u></b>	<b><u>Identified Men</u></b>	<b><u>With Biographies</u></b>	<b><u>Biographies</u></b>
600	69	26	38%
601	72	44	61%
604	38	13	34%

605	52	8	15%
610	16	11	69%
611	18	11	61%
613	5	3	60%
614	19	12	63%
615	15	10	67%
500	25	15	66%
501	17	7	41%
503	5	4	80%
504	22	16	73%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>368</b>	<b>180</b>	<b>49%</b>

### **Northern Squadrons**

Membership of the northern AAF squadrons shows some similarities to the southern squadrons but also some significant differences.

602 (City of Glasgow) was formed on 15<sup>th</sup> September 1925 at Renfrew, with Captain J D Latta as Commanding Officer. A wooden hut was set up as the new recruiting centre, and within the first week more than 200 men had applied to join. Three men, H G Davidson, J P Drew and C A S Parker, had also begun training for their pilots licences which were necessary for pilot entry into the Auxiliary Air Force. By 1926 D F McIntyre had passed his flying training and was joined by Pilot Officer Lord Clydesdale and A F Farquhar and R Faulds. In January 1933 the squadron moved to



a new airfield at Abbotsinch and the squadron made history when Squadron Leader the Marquess of Clydesdale, with an observer and Flight Lieutenant D F McIntyre, with a photographer, became the first men to fly over Mount Everest. Both men received the Air Force Cross. Empire Air Day in 1935 saw a crowd of 1,500 people visit the squadron to watch the air displays. On 12<sup>th</sup> December 1937, fifteen officers provided the guard of honour at the wedding of the Marquess of Clydesdale to Lady Elizabeth Percy at St Giles' Cathedral Edinburgh. A significant event took place in April 1939 when Leading Aircraftsman Phillips began pilot training, the first volunteer for the new post of NCO-pilot. May 1939 saw a crowd of 20,000 come to the aerodrome for Empire Air Day. When war began 22 AAF officers and 174 AAF airmen were embodied into the Royal Air Force for the duration of the war.

Of the 46 officers who were identified as being gazetted into 602 Squadron, information about individual backgrounds was found for 27 of them. This equates to 59%. Of these individual officers, 11% attended public school, including Douglas Douglas-Hamilton and Colin Alfred Stuart Parker who attended Eton, and William Harold Mitchell who attended Sedburgh School. 6% of men attended Oxford or Cambridge University, including William Harold Mitchell, while 2% of men attended universities such as Charles Hector MacLean. 6% of the men took part in elite sports such as rowing, rugby, boxing and yachting, whilst 8% took up work such as law or politics, such as Douglas Douglas-Hamilton who was MP for East Renfrewshire and Charles Hector Maclean who was a lawyer. A further 7% worked for family businesses. 26% of the men had engagement announcements in *the Times* and a further 11% also had the birth of their children announced in *the Times*.

603 (City of Edinburgh) Squadron was formed on 14<sup>th</sup> October 1925 at RAF Turnhouse as a day bomber squadron with an establishment of 23 officers and 158 airmen. The first Commanding Officer was Squadron Leader J McKelvie and David Ross, author of 603 (City of Edinburgh) two volume squadron history found that:

the initial influx of officers into the squadron consisted of professional businessmen from Edinburgh and the surrounding districts, and the airmen were of various trades and callings, from corporation employees and civilian industry to students from the university.<sup>231</sup>

Furthermore David Ross pointed out that:

The wealthy young professionals and students who joined 603 Squadron after it was founded in 1925 were the cream of society, the “young tearaways” of their day who could afford to pay for flying lessons to indulge their love of aviation.<sup>232</sup>

The squadron headquarters were at 25 Learmouth Terrace, and when the first training camp took place, the squadron was represented by 3 officers and 55

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<sup>231</sup>

David Ross, *The Greatest Squadron of them all. The Definitive History of 603 (City of Edinburgh) Squadron RAuxAF, Volume 1, Formation to the end of 1940.* (London, 2003) p2.

<sup>232</sup>

David Ross, ‘Saluting the few: the remarkable story of Edinburgh’s 603 Squadron,’ Available at [www.scotsman.com](http://www.scotsman.com). Viewed on 26<sup>th</sup> January 2016.

airmen. By December 1926, the squadron establishment was 4 officers and 64 airmen, this had risen to 17 officers and 155 airmen by the end of 1928.

Would be pilots had to face preliminary hurdles. If a vacancy occurred, serving officers of the squadron were asked for recommendations. They were first interviewed by the adjutant. If he felt they were suitable, he sent them to Comiiston House, S/L McKelvie's home, to be vetted by the CO and his wife. The survivors then faced the stiffest test of all – a trial flight with the adjutant. In 1929, ten candidates got as far as the test flight, but only one of these got through.<sup>233</sup>

Each officer was required to buy RAF service dress. They were given a uniform allowance of £40. Also officers could buy mess kit at their own expense, "as a mark of distinction, 603 Squadron obtained official permission to wear red silk linings in their tunics and greatcoats."<sup>234</sup>

This this mirrors the behaviour of 601 (County of London) Squadron who also personalised their uniforms. Moreover, "joining 603 Squadron in the 1930s was something of a family affair with brother following brother, or teenagers following their old school chums"<sup>235</sup> in 1931, S/L McKelvie retired and S/L Hylton Murray-

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<sup>233</sup>

Ross, *The Greatest Squadron of them all, Volume 1*, p6.

<sup>234</sup>

Ibid, p7.

<sup>235</sup>

Philipson, who owned an estate at Stobo, took over. He was also a magistrate and a parliamentary candidate who was elected as Member of Parliament for Twickenham. On 30th June 1931, Lord George Nigel Douglas-Hamilton joined the squadron, and he became commanding officer in 1934 following the death of S/L Hylton Murray-Philipson. In 1938, Lord George Nigel Douglas-Hamilton relinquished his commission and was replaced as CO by S/L Ernest Hildebrand Stevens, a lawyer by trade.

47 officers were identified for 603 Squadron, and of those men, 40, or 87% have short biographies. 15% of the young men attended public school, for example both George and Malcolm Douglas-Hamilton attended Eton, whilst Patrick Gifford attended Sedburgh School. 10% of the officers attended either Oxford or Cambridge University, for example, Donald Kenneth Andrew Mackenzie attended Cambridge University, as did George Lovell Denholm, whilst George Nigel Douglas-Hamilton attended Oxford University. 10% of the young men attended Edinburgh University, such as Patrick Gifford. 15% of the men had professional jobs, such as Patrick Gifford, who was a lawyer and James Lawrence who was a banker, whilst Malcolm Avendale was the MP for Inverness. 25% of the officers had their engagement announced, such as Alastair Henry Bruce, Thomas Clark Garden and Ivone Kirkpatrick. 8% had their children's births announced in *the Times*, for example, Edward Stanley Viner Burton. Finally 15% of the men worked for family businesses, such as George Lovell Denholm whose family business was coal exporters and pit prop importers, and Thomas Usher of Tom Usher and Son Ltd Brewery.

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Ibid, p8.

607 (County of Durham) Squadron, was formed at Usworth on 17<sup>th</sup> March 1930. It was comprised of officer recruits who shared some similarities to the southern squadrons, including William Whitty who attended Liverpool University studying to become an electrical engineer; George Craig who had attended Aysgarth School, followed by Winchester School and then Pembroke College, Cambridge where he gained a soccer blue and an MA in Law Studies, working in Durham as a solicitor; Leslie Runciman, the eldest son of Viscount Runciman, who had been educated at Eton, before moving to Trinity College Cambridge to study to become a chartered accountant; W F Blackadder who attended Cambridge University and in later life was a director of Moor Line.. Many of the recruits worked in family businesses rather than large companies; for example Leslie Runciman worked for the family shipping company called The Moor Line; Launcelot Smith was the Chairman of the Board of Directors at his family business called Smiths Dock Repairing Company; J R Kayll worked for the family timber business, Joseph Thompson and Co Ltd. Two of the original recruits worked for larger companies; Maurice Irving was an engineer at Vicker Armstrongs and John Sample was the land agent for the Duke of Portland Line. Both Leslie Runciman and W Blackadder had the sporting interests of most AAF recruits; Runciman as a transatlantic yachtsman and Blackadder as a Scottish rugby player. Thomas Templer Richardson and Kenneth Stoddart both had their marriages announced in *The Times*.

Of the 10 officers with biographies, 50% of them attended a public school and 20% of them attended Oxford or Cambridge University. Furthermore, 60% of them worked

in a professional capacity compared to 20% who worked in family businesses. Finally 20% of them had their engagement or marriage announced in *the Times*.

Another comparable northern squadron was 609 (West Riding) formed on 10<sup>th</sup> February 1936 at Yeadon near Leeds. Its CO was Squadron Leader, Harald Peake. With a similar background to Dore, he was a retired officer of the Yorkshire Dragoons Yeomanry. Yorkshire, had been heavily industrialised during the nineteenth century although still retained many large country estates. Officer candidates tended to reflect this mix, with sons of fathers who worked in industry mixing with sons of landed families.

Peake was both late Master of the Rufford Hounds on the one side, and a member of a Yorkshire colliery-owning family on the other. Indeed:

the person mainly responsible for Harald Peake's appointment had been Major General The (10<sup>th</sup>) Earl of Scarbrough, Chairman and driving force of the West Riding Territorial Army Association. Looking for a man of local influence to attract and select the best human material for its new winged offshoot, he was no doubt pleased to find that no one was better qualified than his own neighbour. For Harald Peake had been a Territorial already, flew an aeroplane, had rowed for Eton, Cambridge and England, and possessed a drive and ability that later would win him the Chairmanship successively of the London Assurance, the Steel Company of Wales and Lloyds Bank Ltd.<sup>236</sup>

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236

Some of the original officer recruits came from similar backgrounds from those of 607 Squadron: Stephen G Beaumont was a graduate from Oxford University, as was John Dundas, who was an aristocrat, athlete and journalist on the editorial staff of the *Yorkshire Post*, while Geoffrey Ambler had been educated at Cambridge; Stephen Beaumont and Bernard Little were solicitors while Dudley Persse-Joynt worked for an oil company; Philip Barran was a trainee mining engineer and manager of a brickworks owned by his mother's family; Desmond Ayre was also a mining engineer. Textile backgrounds included A R Edge who worked for I G Dyestuffs Ltd, Joseph Dawson son of Sir Benjamin Dawson who came from one of Yorkshires leading textile families "and used to arrive for training in a Lagonda;"<sup>237</sup> Jarvis Blayney and Geoffrey Ambler came from local textile families. Ambler, who had been commissioned into the AAF in 1931, joined 608 Squadron at its outset and became Commanding Officer on 30<sup>th</sup> December 1934. In November 1937 he took up command of 609 (West Riding of Yorkshire) Squadron.<sup>238</sup> Philip Henry Barran, William Humble and Peter Richard Nickols all had their forthcoming marriages announced in *The Times*. When officers from the Squadron attended a "war" course at the Flying Training School, Little Rissington in Gloucester, Ziegler notes:

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F H Ziegler, *The Story of 609 Squadron. Under the White Rose*, (London, 1971), p39.

<sup>237</sup>

Ziegler, *The Story of 609*, p 52.

<sup>238</sup>

Leslie Hunt, *Twenty-One Squadrons. The History of the Royal Auxiliary Air Force 1925-1957*, (London, 1972) p181 & p195.

the entire intake for this course consisted of Auxiliary officers and like-minded former members of University Air Squadrons. When Peter Dunning-White of 601 Squadron drove up in a Rolls Royce, complete with valet, John McGrath of the same Squadron in an Alvis Speed-Twenty, and even Michael Appleby of 609 in a drop-head Hillman, the rule about no private cars was quietly waived.<sup>239</sup>

Of the 13 identified officers with biographies in 609 Squadron, 23% of them attended a public school, whilst 38% of them attended an Oxbridge University. 62% of them worked within a professional job as compared to 23% who worked in a family business. Furthermore, 23% of them had their engagement or marriage announced in *the Times*.

611 (West Lancashire) Squadron was formed:

in name only on 10<sup>th</sup> February 1936 at RAF Hendon, London, five days after the Liverpool City Council had granted a tenancy to the Air Ministry of five acres of land to the East of the Chapel House Farm Speke, on which the tenant was to construct roadways and erect temporary buildings. The Squadron moved to the local Territorial Army Headquarters in the centre of Liverpool on 1<sup>st</sup> April 1936 prior to moving to Speke airfield on 6<sup>th</sup> May 1936.<sup>240</sup>

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239

Ziegler, *The Story of 609*, p60.

240



Squadron Leader Geoffrey Langton Pilkington was appointed to command it. Educated at Broadstairs, Eton and Magdalen College, Oxford, he was a member of the Pilkington Glass family who employed several officer recruits such as W.L. Lang and J.N. O'Reilly Blackwood. He became a sub-director of the family firm in 1910 and a director in 1919. Other officer recruits shared similar university and sporting backgrounds, such as W J Leather and Kenneth Douglas Stoddart, who both attended public school before going to Cambridge where they played rugby. A W Richards had attended Liverpool University and worked as a solicitor, whilst both D W S Howroyd and Kenneth Douglas Stoddart worked for their own respective family businesses; Howroyd within a family chemical business and Stoddart as part of a family ship suppliers. R K Crompton had attended Charterhouse School and was a hunting man with the Cheshire hounds.

This indicates that 36% of the officer recruits attended public school and 55% attended Oxford or Cambridge University. 36% of them worked in a professional job whilst 27% worked in a family business. Finally 36% of the young men had their engagement or marriage announced in *The Times*.

612 (County of Aberdeen) Squadron was formed on 1<sup>st</sup> June 1937 at Dyce Aerodrome as an army co-operation unit. It trained in aircraft called Avro Tutors and in December 1937 it had received two-seat Hawker Hectors which were used by

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Aldon P Ferguson, *Beware! Beware! The History of 611 (West Lancashire) Squadron Royal Auxiliary Air Force* (Reading, 2004) p9.

army cooperation squadrons. The squadron converted to a General Reconnaissance squadron in 1938, and in July 1939 the squadron received Avro Anson aircraft which had room for four crew members and had a much better range, making them better suited for the reconnaissance role. The first few auxiliary pilots who were successful in gaining their flying badges were R B Thomson, A M Scott, S A Middleton, D G E Benzie, N S F Gilchrist, R R Russell and I G F Stephen. By April 1938, 54 airmen had been recruited as ground crew. In August the squadron was transferred into No 18 (Reconnaissance) Group of Coastal Command flying Avro Anson's. 20<sup>th</sup> May 1939 saw 5000 people coming to the aerodrome for Empire Air Day.

Of the 21 identified officers within the squadron, 12 of the young men have some biographical information about them, which represents 57%. Only 8% of the young men went to public school, for example, Herbert Oswald Berry attended Harrow, and similarly, only 8% attended an Oxbridge University and this was Herbert Oswald Berry who attended Pembroke College Oxford. 33% of the young men worked within the professions, for example, Douglas Gordon Emslie Benzie was an accountant, whilst Harry Bethune Gilchrist was a lawyer. Only 17% of the men placed engagement announcements in *the Times* and only 8% of the men had birth announcements.

613 (City of Manchester) Squadron was formed at Ringway on 1<sup>st</sup> March 1939, the last of the original AAF squadrons to be formed before the start of World War 2. As a result of the lateness in its creation, many of its original recruits were from the RAFVR. For example, Patrick Peter Colum Barthropp was born in Dublin in 1920

and was educated at St Augustine's Abbey School in Ramsgate; St Joseph's College near Market Drayton and Ampleforth College, North Yorkshire; after leaving he went to Rover's on an engineering apprenticeship, but, since he was able to fly, he volunteered for AAF and joined 613 Squadron in May 1939. As there was only one named officer recruit for 613 Squadron the percentages show 100% for most of the categories.

616 (South Yorkshire) Squadron was formed on 1<sup>st</sup> November 1938 at Doncaster. Squadron Leader, the Earl of Lincoln was posted in from 609 Squadron to command the unit. Lionel Harwood (Buck) Casson who was the son of a steel buyer was one of the first officer candidates. Educated at Birkdale School and then the King's School, Ely, he worked in the steel industry in Sheffield before and after the war. Similarly with only one officer located with a biography, the percentage shows as 100% for public school and working in a professional job.

502 (Ulster) Squadron was formed on 1<sup>st</sup> May 1925, as the only Irish Special Reserve squadron, commanded by Squadron Leader R D Oxland. A recruiting office was set up in the Old Town Hall Street. The 1<sup>st</sup> of December saw Pilot Officer Robert McLaughlin becoming the first SR pilot, and by the end of 1925 there were 50 airman recruits, which had been recruited by visiting local factories and employers to raise interest in the release of men for part-time duties. In September 1927 a new headquarters was found in Donegal Square South which had workshops, a gym and social facilities which boosted recruitment, including 3 new SR officers. The Bank of Northern Ireland became the first employer to offer staff leave on half pay if they

gained commissions and this led to 2,500 applications for vacancies within the squadron. By 30<sup>th</sup> June 1928 502 Squadron had an establishment of thirteen officers and ninety seven airmen. On 1<sup>st</sup> July 1937, 502 (Ulster) Squadron was transferred into the Auxiliary Air Force and Squadron Leader L R Briggs took on the role of Commanding Officer. Avro Anson aircraft arrived as the squadron was converted to a general reconnaissance squadron as part of No 18 Group of RAF Coastal Command.

Of the 18 officers identified for 502 Squadron, information was found on 14 of them, which equates to 78%. Of these men, 28% attended public school for example, Brian George Corry and Robin Terance Corry. 14%, were employed within the professions, including William Morrisson May who was an accountant. Finally only 16% of men had their engagements announced in *the Times*, such as, Joseph Cecil Gosselin Bell.

**Table 6 - Auxiliary Air Force and Special Reserve northern squadrons showing percentages of men with biographies**

<b><u>Squadron</u></b>	<b><u>Number of</u></b>	<b><u>Number of Men</u></b>	<b><u>% of Men With</u></b>
<b><u>Number</u></b>	<b><u>Identified Men</u></b>	<b><u>With</u></b>	<b><u>Biographies</u></b>
		<b><u>Biographies</u></b>	
602	46	27	59%
603	47	40	85%
607	24	10	42%
608	32	20	63%

609	21	13	62%
612	21	12	57%
616	2	1	50%
502	18	14	78%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>211</b>	<b>137</b>	<b>65%</b>

Of the 211 officers identified who served in Northern AAF squadrons prior to the start of the Second World War, background details have been found on 65% or 137 of the officers. It is evident that the young officer candidates from the northern AAF squadrons shared similar social backgrounds to their Southern counterparts; over 33% came from landed backgrounds or from family-owned businesses particularly in textiles, collieries, shipping, timber and glass. 16% enjoyed elite sports like foxhunting, yachting, rowing, rugby or cricket. A virtually equal number of northern officer candidates attended Oxford or Cambridge, which is around 38%. Furthermore, social connections remained important and a national system of networking, starting at public school and then continuing through sporting and social links, found a new expression in the AAF. It is a case of class identities and solidarities transcending regional differences. Detailed information of this research can be found in Appendix 1.

**Table 7 - Combined Auxiliary Air Force and Special Reserve data by category**

<b><u>CATEGORY</u></b>	<b><u>PERCENTAGE</u></b>
PUBLIC SCHOOL	20

OXBRIDGE	19
UNIVERSITY	7
ELITE SPORTS	11
MARRIAGE ANNOUNCEMENT	26
BIRTH ANNOUNCEMENT	4
DEATH ANNOUNCEMENT	27
PROFESSION	24
FAMILY BUSINESS	12
UNIVERSITY AIR SQUADRON	2

**Table 8 - Comparison between English, Scottish, Irish and Welsh Auxiliary Air Force and Special Reserve Squadrons with biographical details.**

<b><u>English Squadrons</u></b>	<b><u>Scottish Squadrons</u></b>	<b><u>Irish Squadrons</u></b>	<b><u>Welsh Squadrons</u></b>
600 (City of London) <b>37%</b>	602 (Glasgow) <b>59%</b>	502 (Ulster) <b>78%</b>	614 (Glamorgan) <b>63%</b>
601 (County of London) <b>64%</b>	603 (Edinburgh) <b>85%</b>		
604 (Middlesex) <b>34%</b>	612 (Aberdeen) <b>57%</b>		
605 (Warwick) <b>15%</b>			
607 (Durham) <b>44%</b>			
608 (North Riding) <b>63%</b>			
609 (West Riding) <b>75%</b>			

610 (Chester) <b>69%</b>			
611 (Lancashire) <b>61%</b>			
613 (Manchester) <b>67%</b>			
615 (Surrey) <b>67%</b>			
616 (South Yorkshire) <b>80%</b>			
500 (Kent) <b>66%</b>			
501 (Gloucester) <b>41%</b>			
503 (Lincoln) <b>80%</b>			
504 (Nottingham) <b>73%</b>			

**Table 9 - English Auxiliary Air Force and Special Reserve Squadrons with biographical details by category.**

SQN	600	601	604	605	607	608	609	610	611	613	615	616	500	501	503	504
Public School	32%	34%	54%	25%	36%	30%	27%	18%	45%	33 %	0%	50%	0%	0%	75%	50%
Oxbridge	32%	36%	31%	13%	27%	45%	27%	18%	55%	0%	0%	25%	0%	0%	25%	12%
University	0%	6%	0%	0%	20%	0%	9%	25%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Elite sport	11%	19%	8%	25%	18%	15%	20%	27%	18%	33 %	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Marriage Ann	16%	16%	31%	13%	27%	35%	20%	18%	27%	0%	30 %	25%	73 %	29%	0%	24%
Birth Ann	11%	6%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	25%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Death Ann	32%	36%	26%	38%	36%	10%	13%	55%	36%	0%	60 %	25%	27 %	71%	100 %	47%
Profession	47%	49%	23%	38%	55%	15%	46%	18%	18%	33 %	10 %	75%	0%	0%	0%	18%
Family bus	0%	20%	0%	0%	18%	55%	27%	0%	27%	0%	10 %	0%	0%	0%	25%	5%
UAS	0%	3%	8%	0%	0%	15%	0%	0%	9%	0%	0%	25%	0%	0%	0%	0%

**Table 10 - Scottish Auxiliary Air Force and Special Reserve Squadrons with biographical details by category.**

<b><u>SQN</u></b>	<b><u>602</u></b>	<b><u>603</u></b>	<b><u>612</u></b>
PUBLIC SCHOOL	17%	13%	9%
OXBRIDGE	9%	8%	9%
UNIVERSITY	0%	8%	0%
ELITE SPORT	13%	13%	0%
MARRIAGE ANNOUNCEMEN T	39%	24%	18%
BIRTH ANNOUNCEMEN T	18%	8%	9%
DEATH ANNOUNCEMEN T	22%	58%	27%
PROFESSION	4%	18%	18%



FAMILY BUSINESS	13%	13%	0%
UAS	0%	3%	0%

**Table 11 - Irish Auxiliary Air Force and Special Reserve Squadrons with biographical details by category.**

<b><u>SQN</u></b>	<b><u>502</u></b>
PUBLIC SCHOOL	3%
OXBRIDGE	0%
UNIVERSITY	0%
ELITE SPORT	0%
MARRIAGE ANNOUNCEMENT	46%
BIRTH ANNOUNCEMENT	0%
DEATH ANNOUNCEMENT	15%
PROFESSION	23%
FAMILY BUSINESS	0%
UAS	0%

**Table 12 - Welsh Auxiliary Air Force and Special Reserve Squadrons with biographical details by category.**

<b>SQN</b>	<b>614</b>
PUBLIC SCHOOL	25%
OXBRIDGE	17%
UNIVERSITY	0%
ELITE SPORT	8%
MARRIAGE ANNOUNCEMENT	33%
BIRTH ANNOUNCEMENT	25%
DEATH ANNOUNCEMENT	50%
PROFESSION	17%
FAMILY BUSINESS	0%
UAS	0%

### **Case Study of 608 (North Riding) Squadron**

608 (North Riding) was formed on 17<sup>th</sup> March 1930. It was assigned to No 6 Auxiliary Group as a bomber squadron and located at Thornaby. It is evident that there were social links between young men who were selected to join 608 Squadron as officer recruits. These included a common university background, sporting activities, and membership of a UAS; in many cases there were also business links. These kind of social links do not usually exist between the airmen or the NCOs and decisions to volunteer for the AAF were clearly different. Another reason for volunteering was to pre-empt conscription in a potential war that many men felt was likely to occur following the appointment of Hitler as Chancellor of Germany in 1933. 27% volunteered simply because their friends did.

32 officers were identified, and of these men, 20 had biographies, which equates to 63%:

**Table 13 - 608 (North Riding) Squadron Auxiliary Air Force biographical details**  
**by category**

<b><u>Category</u></b>	<b><u>Number</u></b>	<b><u>Percentage</u></b>
Public School	5	25%
Oxbridge	9	45%
University	0	0%
Elite Sport	3	15%
Marriage Announcement	7	35%
Birth Announcement	0	0%
Death Announcement	0	0%
Professional	4	20%
Family Business	11	55%
University Air Squadron	3	15%

In many cases, the young officers knew each other and this was seen as vital in ensuring that an extended family atmosphere existed within the squadron.

Camaraderie was important because it meant that the young men could train and live together on a weekend, would be able to get on with each other and know what was expected of both themselves and their fellow officers. It also supported the principle that their local communities would adopt AAF squadrons and thus foster some sort of local pride in them. Young middle class gentlemen were also keen to volunteer because it meant that they were able to fly without being members of a flying club in the local area, an example being the activities of Geoffrey Shaw who entered the MacRobertson Air Race in 1934.<sup>241</sup>

55% of the pilot recruits worked within family businesses and the reason for this appears to be that family concerns could often be more flexible in releasing family members. These families were also prominent within the local area and seen as its social leaders. This is clear from the evidence in the local press reporting on engagements and weddings of eminent young men who joined the AAF in the period up to the start of World War Two. Several of them most notably, Squadron Leader Ambler, Geoffrey Shaw and Keith Pyman, owned their own aeroplanes.<sup>242</sup> This is a significant factor in determining the financial standing of these young men and their families since the average cost of an aeroplane during the mid-1920s was £830. Another indicator of their financial status was that 74% of the young officers had their own cars. Motor cars at that time cost upwards of £350 at a time when the average wages for young men would be less than £2 a week. This level of wealth, whilst not matching the super-rich families associated with 600 and 601 squadron, stood as

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<sup>241</sup>

*The Times*, December 24<sup>th</sup> 1934, p8.

<sup>242</sup>

Interview with Mrs E Appleby-Brown, Saltburn by Sea, 16<sup>th</sup> March 2002.

particularly stark contrast to the wider economic climate of Teesside where anywhere between 20% and 40% of the adult insured workforce were unemployed in Stockton and Middlesbrough during the same period.<sup>243</sup>

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<sup>243</sup>

Lady Bell, *At The Works*, (Middlesbrough, 1997), p79.

It is probable therefore that the officer recruits to 608 Squadron, in keeping with officers in other AAF squadrons, had knowledge of each other through either their working environment or through their family connections. Details of individual officers backgrounds are located in Appendix 1. For example W Howard Davis lived in Saltburn and his family knew the Appleby-Browns and the Shaws<sup>244</sup>; J Newhouse's family knew the Clayton, Wilson and Wright families through business links<sup>245</sup>, whilst the Appleby-Brown and Shaw families knew the Baird and Phillips families.<sup>246</sup> Vaux, Robertson and Pyman also had links through land owning.<sup>247</sup> 25% of the officer candidates had been to public school; for example Geoffrey Ambler, Phillip Lloyd-Graeme, Geoffrey Shaw and Peter Vaux; 45% had been to university, including Ambler, Shaw, Newhouse, Appleby-Brown, and Vaux who attended Cambridge; Phillip Lloyd-Graeme and Paul Kennedy were Oxford men. Other common links between the young officers were UAS's and elite sporting activities. However, it is apparent that none of these 1930s recruits to 608 Squadron had quite the elevated social backgrounds or connections associated with recruits to London's 600 and 601 Squadrons. 55% of 608 Squadron officers for example, came from local businesses and tended to socialize in a middle-class culture that lacked the titled aristocratic and landed connections found amongst 600 and 601 men. That said, they shared a common experience of private education and Oxbridge, as well as subscribing to an increasingly unified middle-class culture promoted through print culture and

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<sup>244</sup>

Interview with Mrs E Appleby-Brown, Saltburn by Sea, 16<sup>th</sup> March 2002

<sup>245</sup>

Ibid, 16<sup>th</sup> March 2002.

<sup>246</sup>

Ibid, 16<sup>th</sup> March 2002.

<sup>247</sup>

Interview with Mr P Vaux's son, Darlington, November 18<sup>th</sup> 2005.

education. Whilst many of the 608 officers might have struggled to hold their own in the social tests favoured by 600 and 601, they nonetheless exerted considerable social authority in their own localities.

For example, Geoffrey Ambler was the grandson of Sir James Hill, who was the owner of James Hill & Sons Ltd, the largest private wool merchants in the country, and also Liberal MP for Bradford Central. Geoffrey's father, Frederick Ambler, owned Midland Mills in Bradford, his mother, Annie Hill, was the sister of Sir James Hill. Geoffrey was born at Baildon in 1904 and was educated at Shrewsbury and rowed for the school at Henley in 1922. He attended Clare College, Cambridge where he obtained his BA degree and rowed in the winning university crews of 1924, 1925 and 1926. By 1930 he was Director of Fred Ambler Limited of Bradford, his father's woollen firm. A member of Yorkshire Aeroplane Club, he already had his pilot's license and owned his own plane.

Geoffrey Shaw came from Nunthorpe and his family owned W G Shaw Engineering Co in North Ormesby. His father, W G Shaw, was the President of the Middlesbrough branch of the Institute of British Foundry men. Geoffrey was educated in Scotland but then attended Cambridge University where he learned to fly as part of the UAS. He also owned his own aeroplane which he used for long business trips. He took part in the MacRobertson Air Race from England to Australia in 1934.



John Newhouse came from one of the villages outside Middlesbrough, attended Cambridge University and was part of a family that owned Newhouses Department Store in Middlesbrough. William Appleby-Brown was from Saltburn; his father, James Brown, worked for the family firm J Brown and Co who were builder's merchants at Queens Square in Middlesbrough. The Brown family was prominent in Middlesbrough and included Alderman John Wesley Brown, who was MP for the town in 1921.

William attended Cambridge University where he learned to fly as a member of the UAS. After university, he then joined the family firm. His family also had a shipping company called Lion Shipping that imported iron ore from Spain and Timber from the Baltic States. They were very friendly with the Baird, Wrightson and Crosthwaite families. By the same token, the Appleby- Browns often visited the home of Sir Thomas Wrightson at Neasham and Eryholme.

Dennis Baird came from West Hartlepool and his family business was importing various timber from the Baltic and Russia. Harry Clayton's family owned a well-known retail business in Middlesbrough and finally the families of Anthony Neville Wilson and Cosmo William Wright were clothiers in the Tower House in Middlesbrough.

Links with the aristocracy may have been thin on the ground, but 36% of the officers in 608 had landed connections. For example, Peter Vaux was born in Grindon near Sunderland, went to school at Harrow, then went to Cambridge where he joined the UAS and learned to fly. He was commissioned into the Auxiliary Air Force in July 1933 and lived at Piercebridge in County Durham. He was the son of Colonel Ernest Vaux of Brettanby Manor, Barton. He was also an amateur jockey who rode in the Grand National, took part in various point-to-points, and rode with the Zetland and Bedale Hunts. At a lower level of landed society, George Williams, another pre-war pilot with 608 Squadron, born in Shrewton, near Salisbury in 1917, attended St Probus Prep School in Salisbury and then went on to boarding school in Cornwall, before studying at Cambridge University. His father was a gentleman farmer who was also a district and county councillor and Justice of the Peace. Similarly, Keith Pyman lived outside Yarm where his family were gentlemen farmers, and James Robertson from Saltburn also came from a farming family.

Other young recruits came from landed backgrounds but then worked for major companies or professions; for example, Philip Lloyd-Graeme, later Sir Philip Cunliffe Lister, was a member of the Lloyd-Graeme family from Sewerby Hall and estate in the East Riding of Yorkshire. His father-in-law was Sir John Cunliffe-Lister, Baron of Masham and chief shareholder in Manningham Mills. Philip was educated at Winchester and University College Oxford. Later he was a barrister, Conservative MP and was three times President of the Board of Trade.

The spectrum of middle-class backgrounds continued with 50% of officers from the Squadron having links to local industry. W Howard Davis was the son of RW and JP Howard Davis of Elton House, Darlington. He lived in Saltburn and worked as Chief Accountant to Dorman Long. John Sherburn Priestly (Pip) Phillips was born in Dublin in November 1919; his father John Skelton Phillips was in the army whilst his mother was related to J B Priestly. He attended St Olave's School in York before moving to the senior school, St Peter's School in York, on 23<sup>rd</sup> January 1933 where he was a full boarder. He left the school in July 1936 and moved to Crooksbar Lane in Norton; Stockton on Tees. He was a successful rower for the school and a cadet in the OTC. He worked as an engineer in Darlington, employed by the London North Eastern Railway, joining 608 Squadron in 1937 at the age of 18. P Kennedy came from Middlesbrough and attended Oxford University. He was an accountant at ICI and Ivo W H Thompson was the son of Sir Wilfrid and Lady Thompson of Old Nunthorpe.

Class not only dictated patterns of recruitment but also the way men spent their leisure time in the AAF. The hierarchy of the AAF meant that officers were kept separate from airmen. They were accommodated at the Officers Mess in Thornaby Hall, where most of their social activities took place. The Sergeants had their own mess, as did the Corporals and other ranks. Officers did not go to any of the other messes unless they were officially invited. To reinforce this point, Mrs Appleby-Brown noted:

The Officers Mess was at Thornaby Hall and it was a long long way from anything else. The officers had no interest in Thornaby and the town. If you come from a distance away you had no interest in Thornaby and the town, you merely wanted to fly. No there would be no mixing. There would be no reason for them to mix.<sup>248</sup>

This sense of social distance played its own part in creating a division between the squadron and the town and in some ways meant that the young officers preferred to stay in the mess and would often engage in various games and high jinks - walking on the ceiling, high-cock-a-lorum, a violent form of leapfrog, and another game where they were on 'piggy back' and fought each other with rolled up newspapers.<sup>249</sup> It was a pattern that matched closely with the antics of 600 and 601 Squadron. All the social activities for young officers revolved invariably around the consumption of large amounts of alcohol followed by games that had their origin in public school common rooms. If the young officers ventured out of the mess they would go to pubs around the area, such as "The Pathfinders" at Maltby or the "Bluebell" in Yarm, but would remain as a group rather than interacting with the locals. This tended to be during the earlier part of the evening before returning to the officer's mess.

It is evident that the social backgrounds and activities of officers from London squadrons and those from 608 Squadron were not identical. The common link was

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<sup>248</sup>

Interview with Mrs E Appleby-Brown, Saltburn by Sea, 16<sup>th</sup> March 2002.

<sup>249</sup>

Interview with Mrs E Appleby-Brown, Saltburn by Sea, 16<sup>th</sup> March 2002.

public schools and universities where a shared culture was promulgated and kept alive in the confines of the officers' mess. Organised sport played a major role in the life of both Oxford and Cambridge university students, in the shape of boat-races, inter-university cricket matches, athletics and inter-collegiate competitions; these helped keep young men physically fit and familiar with team ethics, and fed effortlessly into the life of the typical AAF officer. Also membership of either UAS was common amongst AAF recruits with 17% having been part of these squadrons during their time at university, an experience that laid the foundations for an AAF career.

Clearly a hierarchy existed within the AAF between the officers and the airmen and the research shows that there was little contact between the two in terms of social activities. However, it is apparent that this division had been a crucial part of the AAF as a military organisation. It allowed for the AAF to maintain its image as a "gentleman's flying club" which gave it a certain aura of social exclusivity. This enabled it to attract the "right sort" throughout the 1930s. This elitism was diluted during the war as major changes in the personnel of the AAF took place, some of which were a direct consequence of the creation of the RAFVR, and others as a result of dilution of the AAF. It became increasingly necessary to place regular RAF personnel and RAFVR men in the AAF squadron in order to replace casualties and fatalities; in effect, the previously elite officer class had to be supplemented with non-commissioned pilots to enable the squadrons to function effectively. A final contributory factor to this loss of social exclusivity within the AAF were technological advances in aircraft design and size; more men were necessary to crew the planes,

and the pilots themselves needed to have a wider range of skills to fly safely at greater speeds. Social background became increasingly less important.

Furthermore, as the war developed, sergeants were being used increasingly to fly aircraft. Clearly as the war progressed, there were fewer local officers available to fly, either because of fatalities, injuries or postings to other squadrons, and men from lower ranks filled the gaps. Moreover, as the planes used by Coastal Command increased in size, they needed more men to crew them, and there were not enough officers to do this. Thus changes in aircraft technology were a crucial factor in enabling lower-ranking airmen to fly; a situation that would not have been tolerated during the 1930s when social exclusiveness dominated the officers' mess.

Technological advances in aircraft design and production also resulted in large bombers requiring increasingly large crews. Aircraft such as the Lockheed Hudson, required a crew of six, as crew size increased, some of the rear gunners and navigators became airmen. A co-pilot was also needed because the aircraft had a much longer range for flying. In the first instance, a second officer filled the co-pilots role, but as the war progressed, a shortage of officers led to more NCO pilots being used, first as co-pilots then as pilots themselves. These technological advancements – increases in maximum speeds and range, amounts of weaponry and crew – reinforce the view that the AAF pool of officers could not supply the necessary manpower for these planes on a regular basis, and this transformed the structure and culture of the squadron.

### **The Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve**

When looking at the officers of the RAFVR, making statements about the social composition is much harder. In the first instance, men volunteered to join the RAFVR as an organisation, rather than individual squadrons as in the Auxiliary Air Force and Special Reserve Squadrons. Moreover, since the RAFVR was not fully operational until late 1936, this study only focuses on those volunteers who enlisted between 1937 and the middle of 1939. It is quite clear that there were no significant problems with recruitment.

**Table 14 - Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve Initial data**

<b><u>Number of Identified</u></b> <b><u>Men</u></b>	<b><u>Number of men with</u></b> <b><u>Biographies</u></b>	<b><u>% of Men With</u></b> <b><u>Biographies</u></b>
320	252	79%

From 30<sup>th</sup> July 1936, volunteers were able to enlist in the RAFVR, no experience was necessary, so this was far different from the AAF where officers had to be able to fly before they joined. The RAFVR was to be 'a Citizens Air Force', where airmen would be paid all of their expenses for food, travel and accommodation, as well as an annual bounty. Selection was different to the AAF too, candidates had to go before a selection board and they had to get through a medical examination. This selection process was designed so that every man could get through, unlike that of the AAF which looked for a certain 'type' of young man. It also must be remembered that

these new pilot recruits were enlisted as Leading Aircraftsmen, and during their training they were promoted to sergeant; they were not officers which meant that the net could be much more widely spread. In 1934 an Expansion Scheme for the RAF had been approved increasing the number of Home Defence squadrons from 52 to 75, but the RAF was only recruiting 60 pilots each year, in fact, it needed 800 more pilots each year, and the job of providing these pilots fell to the RAFVR. The aim was to appeal to the widest spectrum of young men.<sup>250</sup>

In December 1938, a new scheme came into place to recruit 6,600 skilled and semi-skilled airmen. Those who wanted to be aircrew would be trained to join existing squadrons rather than using them to create new units such as the auxiliary squadrons who had links to towns and counties. This was never the idea of the RAFVR. By January 1939 the RAFVR had produced 2,500 pilots in half of the anticipated time, and by June 1939, it was decided that all new recruits into the Royal Air Force would be taken in through the RAFVR. When war was declared in September 1939, there were 6,646 pilots, 1,623 Observers and 1,948 Wireless Operators/Air Gunners.<sup>251</sup>

Air Marshal Sir Denis Crowley-Milling noted that:

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<sup>250</sup>

Neville Jones, *The Beginnings of Strategic Air Power. A History of the British Bomber Force 1923-1939*, (Abingdon, 1987), p29.

<sup>251</sup>

Wing Commander Alex Dickson, *The Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve, Memories*, (London, 1997) pp24-25.



I was an apprentice at Rolls Royce in 1937, having gone there straight from school. I was working on the Merlin engine when we heard that there was to be a new reserve called the RAFVR and that we could learn to fly for free. It was almost unbelievable. None of us could have afforded it. We could become pilots and be paid for doing so, and they would even pay your travel expenses. Becoming a pilot was something I could never have been able to pay for. I was earning 30s a week. It was a terrific opportunity and we all thought how tremendous.<sup>252</sup>

He also highlighted the difference between the AAF pilots and the RAFVR pilots when he noted:

I was called up on 3<sup>rd</sup> September 1939, I had my wings, and 150 hours in my logbook. I was a sergeant pilot. We were called “phoney sergeants” by the regulars, because we had not been through the ranks. I didn’t mind what I was called, it was good natured anyway. The important thing to me was that I was a VR pilot. Then we trained alongside Auxiliaries of course and I think a lot of the VRs would have liked to have been Auxiliaries, with their red silk lined uniforms and their famous squadrons. They were officers of course. Their parents had paid for them to learn to fly. We had not developed our own set of traditions but we were very, very proud of the RAFVR.<sup>253</sup>

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252

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Dickson, *The Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve*, p33.

The results of the research will be compared in the same way as those for the AAF and SR squadrons.

**Table 15 - Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve Data by category**

<b><u>Category</u></b>	<b><u>Number of Men</u></b>	<b><u>% of Men</u></b>
Public School	99	39%
Oxbridge	135	54%
University	18	7%
Elite Sport	72	29%
Marriage Announcement	65	26%
Birth Announcement	22	9%
Death Announcement	79	31%
Profession	28	11%
Family Business	8	3%
University Air Squadron	27	10%

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Ibid, p34.

**Table 16 - Auxiliary Air Force and RAFVR actual numbers as a direct comparison by category**

<b><u>CATEGORY</u></b>	<b><u>AAF</u></b>	<b><u>AAF</u></b>	<b><u>RAFVR</u></b>	<b><u>RAFVR</u></b>
	<b>No of Men</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>No of Men</b>	<b>%</b>
Public School	62	20%	99	39%
Oxbridge	71	19%	140	54%
University	5	7%	18	7%
Elite Sport	29	11%	64	29%
Marriage Announcemen t	56	26%	72	28%
Birth Announcemen t	5	4%	19	9%
Death Announcemen t	82	27%	79	31%
Profession	63	24%	36	14%
Family Business	30	12%	2	1%
UAS	7	2%	27	10%

Tracing backgrounds of men who served in the AAF and SR squadrons across Scotland, Ireland and Wales proved somewhat easier than in some of the English squadrons. Many of the individual squadrons had their own histories written by local enthusiasts, which helped with the research in that they did identify individual officers which enabled more detailed research to be done. However, often these non-academic texts did not name individual recruits apart from the squadron commanding officers. These individual book details can be found in the bibliography, individual squadron histories exist for Squadron numbers 600, 601, 603, 604, 605, 607, 608, 609, 611, 616, 500 and 501.

When all of English squadron members have been analysed, the results are not on the whole what would have been expected. Given that most of the limited research focuses on the exploits of the two London squadrons, 600 and 601, their pre-war members do not seem to have been as privileged as was first thought when compared to those members of other AAF squadrons. For example, analysis of 600 (City of London) Squadron recruits show that only 32% of their officers came from a background of public school and an Oxbridge university, whereas 50% of officer recruits from 504 squadron came from the public school/Oxbridge background and 75% of 503 squadron officer recruits came from the same background. However, it is apparent that 47% of 600 squadron recruits worked in the City, and this is not matched by other squadrons.

When occupation is considered more of the men in the northern squadrons worked in family businesses as compared to those in southern squadrons. For most men,

recruitment to the AAF and SR squadrons took place directly through the squadron as only 616 squadron had a 25% take up from UAS's. 616 (South Yorkshire) squadron also stands out as an anomaly as 50% of its officer recruits had come from public school and 75% of them worked in professions.

## **RAFVR**

When analysing the results for the RAFVR certain points need to be considered before the results can be discussed. In the first instance, recruitment into the RAFVR was not via the individual squadron, and this made the identification of officer recruits much more difficult. Thus the London Gazette Archive was used to search for names of recruits to the RAFVR, and took a significantly longer time to identify the individual names, before the Times Digital Archive and other webpages could be used to build up a biography of each man. However, though the process took a longer amount of time, it was more successful than the AAF as 81% of recruits for the RAFVR were identified.

By analysing the results using the same categories as used for the AAF and SR squadrons, the results can be compared. The RAFVR was to be at "citizens air force", where recruits were to come from a much less privileged background, and this would help to relieve the pressure on the AAF and the SR squadrons, where recruiting was more difficult due to what the AAF believed was its exclusivity.

The RAFVR had a higher percentage of candidates attending public school and a significantly higher percentage of people attending Oxford or Cambridge University and being a participant in elite sports such as rowing, fencing and boxing. *Times* announcements such as marriage, births and deaths remain as similar figures. More candidates from the RAFVR joined UAS's, whilst those from family businesses are similar. The number of RAFVR recruits who attended Oxford or Cambridge is virtually double with 140 as compared to the AAF and SR figures which are 71. 88 RAFVR candidates had attended public school compared with 62 for the AAF and SR squadrons. 64 RAFVR recruits had been involved with elite sports as compared to 29 from the AAF and SR. Only seven candidates had been involved in the UAS as compared to 27 in the RAFVR, however the AAF/SR squadrons had 63 men in the professions as compared to 36 in the RAFVR, and 30 working in family businesses compared to 2 in the RAFVR. So, what does this show? From the analysis of the results it is clear that the idea of a citizen's air force in terms of simple entry into the RAFVR did not come to fruition. Significantly more recruits to the RAFVR had come from a public school/Oxbridge background than the AAF. Furthermore the findings are not what was expected when the research began. The results that were expected were that the AAF/SR squadrons would have considerably higher candidates for the public school/Oxbridge/elite sport background and this is clearly not the case.

When we compare the figures for the RAFVR with the same figures for the AAF and SR squadrons the evidence shows that in many ways, the exclusivity of the AAF was matched by the recruits of the RAFVR, regardless of the organisation's intentions when it was first developed. For example, 18% of men in the AAF went to public

school, whilst 39% of the RAFVR recruits attended public school, and this pattern is followed by the 19% of AAF recruits who went to either Oxford or Cambridge University compared to 54% of RAFVR recruits. It must also be pointed out that for the RAFVR, the figures represent a much smaller time span for the RAFVR, that is between 1937 and the middle of 1939, whereas the AAF figures reflect the period 1925 to the middle of 1939.

## **Conclusion**

An analysis of the pre-war data suggests that perhaps the Auxiliaries were not as exclusive as they wanted to portray themselves. Indeed the concept of the AAF as a “gentleman’s flying club” does not hold true when all of the squadrons across the United Kingdom are taken into account. Moreover the concept of the RAFVR being a “citizen’s air force” does not hold true either. The detailed data analysis shows that 20% of the men in the AAF attended public school and only 19% attended an Oxbridge University, whereas, 39% of men in the RAFVR attended public school and 54% of them attended an Oxbridge University. Furthermore, when the two different types of data are compared, the results also show that those recruits to the RAFVR used *the Times* newspaper to make family announcements more than those men in the AAF. The research therefore challenges the existing historiography and provides a new contribution to knowledge by showing that the pre-war TAF was different to what had previously been thought. The Auxiliaries were less exclusive than previously suggested while the RAFVR were in fact more exclusive than had been thought.

## **Chapter 4**

### **The reconstitution of the Territorial Air Force 1946-1957**

#### **Introduction**

This chapter will analyse the way in which the Territorial Air Force (TAF) was re-formed in 1946, following its amalgamation into the Royal Air Force (RAF) for the duration of World War II. Through the use of primary source documents from the National Archives, the discussions between the Air Ministry and the Labour Government, formed after the General Election of July 1945, are identified therefore enabling an analysis of the way in which the post-war TAF was re-created. Bearing in mind the shortcomings of the pre-war reserves, would the same mistakes be made again, resulting in an organisation which was not necessarily fit for purpose?

National Service is also discussed because of the considerable impact that it had on recruiting, particularly for the Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve (RAFVR), but also for the Auxiliary Air Force (AAF), and this is discussed later in the chapter. The chapter will identify the recruitment process of the AAF and the RAFVR and will compare it to that of the pre-war highlighting significant differences in the importance of social class in the post-war world. The pre-war data highlighted the necessity of being the “right type” of young man to be recruited as an officer in the AAF, and



therefore a question to be considered is the extent to which this holds true in the post-war world. This chapter will also discuss the role of recruitment posters which were used between 1948 and 1957. These posters were deliberately designed to appeal to young men who had the technical qualifications needed to fly or maintain a modern jet aeroplane.

### **Reconstitution of the Auxiliary Air Force**

On 14<sup>th</sup> November 1945, William Wedgewood Benn, (Lord Stansgate), Secretary of State for Air, made a statement in the House of Lords on the subject of the post-war Auxiliary and Reserve Forces. Following the speech, the approval of the King was granted for the resuscitation of Reserve Command of the RAF, which had been abolished in 1940 when its work, administering the reserves had ended. He pointed out that “the appropriate joint Territorial Army and Air Force County Associations, with the approval of the Treasury, have been asked to undertake certain preliminary steps towards the re-formation of the AAF squadrons which formed part of our first line air defence in 1939, and have since served with distinction in all theatres of war.”<sup>254</sup>

Over time there would be twenty new Auxiliary squadrons which would be recreated on their old territorial basis. Recruiting to the AAF was going to be from officers and airmen who served with the RAF during the war. The Ministry of Air document notes

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<sup>254</sup>

The National Archives (TNA), AIR20/932, Auxiliary Air Force Reconstitution, ‘Auxiliary and Reserve Air Forces’, Note from Secretary of State for Air, 14<sup>th</sup> April 1946.

that “it is laid down that the new AAF is to be raised by recruiting in the first instance released officers and men who have been trained in the Air Force during the war and who therefore will only require refresher training.”<sup>255</sup> In terms of the AAF, the view was that:

we have the AAF as a means of augmenting economically the front-line strength of the regular RAF by making use of the voluntary services of young men willing to devote most of their spare time to the work. That a standard of efficiency as high as that to be found in regular squadrons can be attained by the AAF squadrons was amply demonstrated in the opening stages of the war and there is no reason to believe that this performance could not be repeated in the future, provided that the incentive is there.<sup>256</sup>

Throughout the end of 1945 and early 1946 there was a great deal of discussion around the role and classification of the newly re-formed AAF squadrons. On 22<sup>nd</sup> February 1946 considerations had been taken into account to determine the final squadron pattern for the AAF. The main points of these discussions were:

1. The squadron should be simple to operate, maintain and administer.

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<sup>255</sup>

TNA, AIR20/932, Auxiliary Air Force Reconstitution, ‘Memo from W G Clements F8 12,’ 12<sup>th</sup> September 1946.

<sup>256</sup>

TNA, AIR20/932, Auxiliary Air Force Reconstitution, “Air Ministry Minute Sheet” Note from E L Colbeck-Welch, DDFT Ops, 3<sup>rd</sup> May 1946.

2. The squadron should not be called upon to proceed overseas except in war and should not be required to work mid-week.
3. The squadron should be static and based close to large towns.
4. AAF squadrons in any particular role, should not outnumber RAF squadrons allotted to that role.<sup>257</sup>

These considerations led the Air Ministry to decide that:

- AAF squadrons should not be included among the small number needed for roles such as long range fighter and coastal shipping strike.
- Nor should they be included in light bomber squadrons or close support fighter units.
- The unit equipment of long range strategical bomber, transport and general reconnaissance squadrons are also considered to be too complicated to be operated and maintained by Auxiliary personnel.<sup>258</sup>

There was a belief that demobbed RAF personnel would be keen to join the AAF to maintain their contact with servicemen who were their friends, but that “once that stock had been depleted, it would have to start using inexperienced crews, who would fly relatively infrequently and therefore might not be able to cope with the increasingly complex technology of aircraft.”<sup>259</sup> Moreover, Air Vice-Marshal Douglas Macfadyen supported this view by concluding that there would be a major gulf

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<sup>257</sup>

TNA, AIR20/932, Auxiliary Air Force Reconstitution, “Auxiliary Air Force Post-War”, D D Pol (G) 2, 2<sup>nd</sup> October 1945.

<sup>258</sup>

Ibid, 2<sup>nd</sup> October 1945.

<sup>259</sup>

Squadron Leader A F Freeman, ‘The Post-War Royal Auxiliary Air Force,’ *Royal Air Force Reserve and Auxiliary Forces*, (Oxford, 2003), p99.

between a man who could fly a modern fighter and a skilled pilot who could operate it effectively.<sup>260</sup> Clearly the shortcomings of part-time pilots and airmen flying and maintaining modern aircraft were apparent as early as February 1946, whilst discussions were taking place to re-form the Auxiliary Squadrons. Furthermore, a memo from the Assistant Chief of Air Staff, dated 10<sup>th</sup> September 1945 noted that “in terms of the proposal to reconstitute a number of AAF squadrons as Night Fighter squadrons, I am of the opinion that it is unacceptable because it is extremely doubtful whether they could be trained to the high standard of efficiency in this specialised role.”<sup>261</sup> However, the decision made by the Air Ministry was that the twenty auxiliary squadrons should comprise 13 day fighter (interceptor) squadrons, 3 night fighter squadrons and 4 light/medium bomber squadrons, which were to be the responsibility of Reserve Command. They would ensure the raising and initial training of the reconstituted AAF squadrons which were to be named and located as follows:<sup>262</sup>

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<sup>260</sup>

Ibid, p100.

<sup>261</sup>

TNA, AIR20/932, Auxiliary Air Force Reconstitution, “Reconstitution of the Auxiliary Air Force,” Memo from the Assistant Chief of Air Staff, 10<sup>th</sup> September 1945.

<sup>262</sup>

TNA, AIR 20/932, Auxiliary Air Force Reconstitution, Auxiliary Air Force Post-War, D D Pol (G) 2, 2<sup>nd</sup> October 1945.

**Table 17 - Reconstituted Auxiliary Air Force squadrons name, classification and location**

<b><u>Squadron Number</u></b>	<b><u>Squadron Name</u></b>	<b><u>Squadron Classification</u></b>	<b><u>Squadron Location</u></b>
500	County of Kent	Night Fighter	West Malling
501	County of Gloucester	Day Fighter	Filton
502	County of Ulster	Light Bomber	Aldergrove
504	County of Notts	Light Bomber	Syerston
600	City of London	Day Interceptor	Biggin Hill
601	County of London	Day Fighter	Hendon and later North Weald
602	County of Glasgow	Day Fighter	Abbotsinch
603	County of Edinburgh	Day Fighter	Turnhouse
604	County of Middlesex	Day Interceptor	Hendon and later North Weald
605	County of Warwick	Night Fighter	Honiley
607	County of Durham	Day Fighter	Ouston

608	North Riding	Light Bomber	Thornaby
609	West Riding	Night Fighter	Church Fenton
610	County of Cheshire	Day Fighter	Hooton Park
611	West Lancashire	Day Fighter	Speke
612	City of Aberdeen	Day Fighter	Dyce
613	City of Manchester	Day Fighter	Ringway
614	County of Glamorgan	Day Fighter	Llandow
615	County of Surrey	Day Fighter	Biggin Hill
616	South Yorkshire	Light Bomber	Finningley

Over several months there was also a dialogue taking place regarding the training of pilots, in that all fighter pilots, with the exclusion of night fighter pilots, would be trained on single-engine fighters, whilst single seat fighter pilots intended for twin-engine jet aircraft such as the Meteor and the Hornet, would receive their training on twin-engine aircraft:

**Table 18 – Reconstituted Auxiliary Air Force pilots in training – aircraft and percentage of pilots**

<b>Type of Aircraft</b>	<b>Percentage of Pilots</b>
Single-Engine	32%
Twin-Engine	48%
Night Fighter	10%

Thus there would be 20 auxiliary squadrons, 13 of which would be day fighter (interceptor) squadrons, 3 would be night fighter squadrons and 4 would be light/medium bomber squadrons.<sup>263</sup> In September 1946, the Defence Committee decided to allow an active air force reserve of 72,000. Of those, 12,000 would be members of the AAF.<sup>264</sup> Wing Commander Jefford, speaking to the Royal Air Force Historical Society noted that “in the event of an emergency the auxiliary units would be embodied and take their places in the front line, as they had done during the Second World War.”<sup>265</sup>

Matters become rather more complicated when discussing the post-war auxiliaries as it was decided to include two other type of squadrons within the AAF – the Light Anti-Aircraft ground-based squadrons of the AAF Regiment and the Auxiliary Fighter Control Units. The role of the Light Anti-Aircraft ground-based squadrons of the AAF Regiment was to act as airfield defence, using their Bofors L40/60 gun, whilst the role of the Auxiliary Fighter Control Units was to control air defence through the use of radar and Ground Controlled Interception units, which rotated 360 degrees allowing for the accurate tracking of aircraft over land and sea. Thus, the AAF was

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<sup>263</sup>

TNA, AIR20/932, Auxiliary Air Force Reconstitution, “Reconstitution of the Auxiliary Air Force”, Letter from the Air Officer Commanding-in-Chief, Headquarters Fighter Command, 25<sup>th</sup> April 1946.

<sup>264</sup>

Wing Commander Jeff Jefford, ‘Post-War Reserves to 1960,’ *Royal Air Force Reserve and Auxiliary Forces*, (Oxford, 2003) p79.

<sup>265</sup>

Ibid, p82.

to have extra recruits which meant that the original figure of 12,000 had to be revised. The figure was increased in 1946 to 26,400, which had a huge impact on the numbers for the RAFVR which fell from 60,000 to 45,600.<sup>266</sup>

**Table 19 - Name of individual AAF squadron and new Light Anti-Aircraft Regiment squadron and new Air Defence Unit.**

<b><u>Flying Squadron Number</u></b>	<b><u>Light Anti-Aircraft Regiment Squadron Number</u></b>	<b><u>Air Defence Units</u></b>
600 (City of London) Squadron	2600 (City of London) Field Squadron AAF Regiment	
601 (County of London) Squadron		
602 (City of Glasgow) Squadron	2602 (City of Glasgow) Field Squadron AAF Regiment	3602 (City of Glasgow) Fighter Control Unit
603 (City of Edinburgh) Squadron	2603 (City of Edinburgh) Field Squadron AAF Regiment	3603 (County of Edinburgh) Fighter Control Unit

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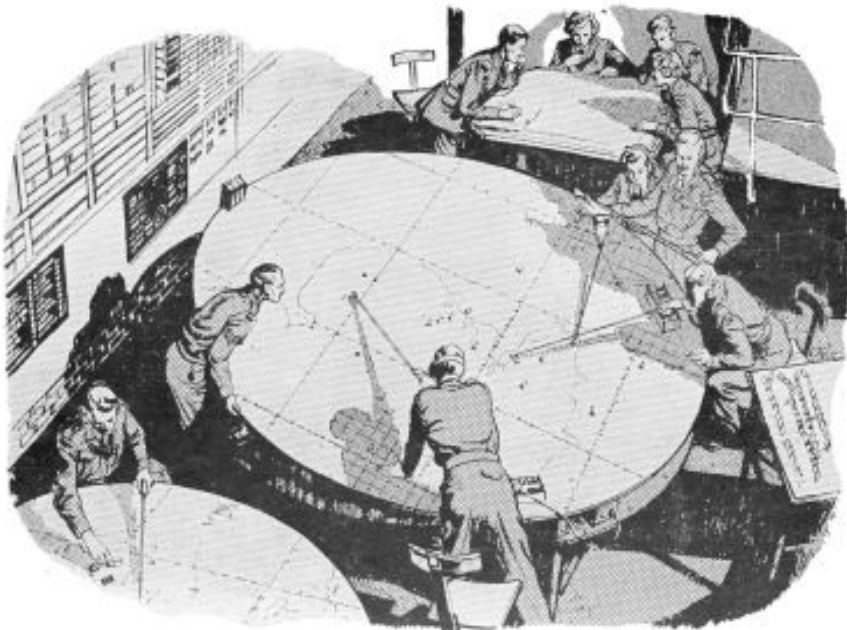
<sup>266</sup>

TNA, AIR20/932, Auxiliary Air Force Reconstitution, "Note by the Secretary of State for Air", 12<sup>th</sup> October 1945.



604 (County of Middlesex) Squadron		3604 (County of Middlesex) Fighter Control Unit
605 (County of Warwick) Squadron	2605 (County of Warwick) Field Squadron AAF Regiment	3605 (County of Warwick) Fighter Control Unit
607 (County of Durham) Squadron		
608 (North Riding) Squadron	2608 (North Riding) Field Squadron AAF Regiment	3608 (North Riding of Yorkshire) Fighter Control Unit
609 (West Riding) Squadron	2609 (West Riding) Field Squadron AAF Regiment	3609 (West Riding of Yorkshire) Fighter Control Unit
610 (County of Chester) Squadron		
611 (West Lancashire) Squadron	2611 (West Lancashire) Field Squadron AAF Regiment	3611 (West Lancashire) Fighter Control Unit
612 (County of Aberdeen) Squadron	2612 (County of Aberdeen) Field Squadron AAF Regiment	3612 (County of Aberdeen) Fighter Control Unit
613 (City of Manchester) Squadron		3613 (City of Manchester) Fighter Control Unit
614 (County of Glamorgan) Squadron		3614 (County of Glamorgan) Fighter Control Unit
615 (County of Surrey) Squadron		
616 (South Yorkshire) mnSquadron	2616 (South Yorkshire) Field Squadron AAF Regiment	
500 (County of Kent) Squadron		3500 (County of Kent) Fighter Control Unit
501 (County of Gloucester) Squadron	2501 (County of Gloucester) Field Squadron AAF Regiment	
502 (Ulster) Squadron	2502 (Ulster) Field Squadron AAF Regiment	3502 (County of Antrim) (Ulster) Fighter Control Unit
503 (City of Lincoln) Squadron		
504 (County of Nottingham) Squadron	2504 (County of Nottingham) Field Squadron AAF Regiment	3504 (County of Nottingham) Fighter Control Unit

Included below are three recruitment advertisements for the Fighter Control Units.



MANNING BRITAIN'S RADAR DEFENCES

## There's a place for YOU in the R.A.F. part-time

In building up Britain's air defences the Royal Air Force needs a large, fully trained reserve of men and women on whom it can rely in any emergency. On their skill the whole fighting efficiency of the R.A.F. hinges — and there's a place for you

among them. In the cheerful atmosphere of the R.Aux.A.F. or the R.A.F.V.R. you will find yourself doing work that is vital and fascinating, among people you will be proud to call your friends. Post the coupon now for full details.



TO: ROYAL AIR FORCE (G.R. 78B), VICTORY HOUSE, LONDON, W.C.2.

*Please send me particulars of part-time service with the R.A.F.*

NAME.....

ADDRESS.....

*(If ex-R.A.F. or W.R.A.F., please give rank, trade and number)*

267

1 – Manning Britain's Radar Defences (1951)

267

*The Times*, 31<sup>st</sup> October 1951, p5.

## 2 - Manning Britain's radar defences (1952)

3

4

FLIGHT

11 JANUARY 1952

## MANNING BRITAIN'S RADAR DEFENCES



There's  
a place for  
YOU..

At Royal Air Force radar and other units manned by part-time volunteers throughout Britain, men and women work side by side in an atmosphere of high efficiency and good fellowship. If you would like your spare time to take on a new and purposeful interest there's a place for you among them. You will gain new skills and new friends — and be helping

in the  
**PART-TIME**  
**R.A.F.**

in the gigantic task of making Britain's air defences strong. You can get full particulars by posting the coupon now.

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TO : ROYAL AIR FORCE (F.R. 70), VICTORY HOUSE, LONDON, W.C.2

Please send particulars of part-time service with the R.A.F. (*Applicants from British Isles only*)

NAME \_\_\_\_\_ ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

(If ex-R.A.F. or ex-W.A.A.F. give rank, trade and No.)

★ IF YOU ARE BETWEEN 14 AND 17—AND KEEN—JOIN THE A.T.C. ★

Join a Fighter Control Unit (1950)

These three advertisements were personalised to attract the attention of the readers, and make them consider their spare time activities. The first advert begins by saying “manning Britain’s radar defences, there’s a place for YOU.” Emphasis here is placed on the “you” and on part-time requirement. The advert contains an image of both men and women monitoring air activity, and highlights the importance of radar when it states “on their skills the whole fighting efficiency of the RAF hinges” which draws the reader in and makes them consider how they could be a part of this. Finally the advertisement paints a picture of “the cheerful atmosphere of the RAuxAF” and “doing work that is vital and fascinating, among people you will be proud to call your friends.” In this way, the advertisement tries to entice the reader into considering whether or not to sign up.<sup>270</sup>

The second advertisement is again personalised so that it appeals directly to the reader. The advert again uses capital letters to highlight the word “YOU” thus welcoming the reader into the advert. There is a woman in the forefront of the picture whose uniform is very light coloured so that she stands out. Again the advert talks about “men and women work side by side in an atmosphere of high efficiency and

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*Flight*, 20<sup>th</sup> April 1950, p24.

270

*The Times*, 31<sup>st</sup> October 1951, p5.

good fellowship” and ends with the statement “if you would like your spare-time to take on a new and purposeful interest there’s a place for you among them.” Again particular words are chosen to draw the reader into the advert and make them think about the opportunities offered<sup>271</sup>.

The final advertisement is a half-page advert which again uses a personal approach. It states that “there is no more interesting way of spending your spare-time.”<sup>272</sup> All three adverts use propaganda in order to drum up recruits into the RAuxAF, at a time when recruiting across the RAF reserves was falling, due to the fact that those ex war-time pilots, aircrew and ground crew who had signed up for the RAuxAF in 1946 had pretty much finished their time in the reserves and in many cases, were actually leaving the armed forces.

The decision to form the RAuxAF Regiment and Fighter Control squadron was to widen the choice of part-time duties that could be given to the auxiliaries. In some ways this was a good decision, many women were able to volunteer and work alongside the men in the Fighter Control Units. This obviously increased the number of recruits to the RAuxAF. But, on the other hand, it thinned out the number of overall recruits across a much wider range of opportunities, and therefore could actually reduce the number of recruits directly into the flying and ground crew squadrons within the RAuxAF. However, it was decided to create 20 Light Anti-Aircraft

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<sup>271</sup>

*Flight*, 11<sup>th</sup> January 1952, p4.

<sup>272</sup>

*Flight*, 20<sup>th</sup> April 1950, p24.

Regiment Squadrons, although as can be seen from the previous table, only 12 were actually created, and 26 Fighter Control Units.

Having briefly discussed the two other types of auxiliary squadrons, we now return to the AAF squadrons themselves. The squadrons maintained much of their pre-war framework and organisation and “were established on a pre-war basis.”<sup>273</sup> Advertisements that appeared in the press emphasised the specific requirements and conditions of service to ensure that men who volunteered were highly motivated and understood the commitment that they were making. For example, the *Yorkshire Post* noted on November 7<sup>th</sup> 1946:

Recruiting for the new Auxiliary Air Force of 20 flying squadrons opens tomorrow and will be carried out by the individual squadrons. At present, only officers and men who have served in the Air Force during the war are eligible to join. Vacancies exist for flying members, for personnel for ground trades...officers will be commissioned for five years and airmen will be enlisted for four years. Members must carry out certain training each year, to be undertaken during evenings, at weekends, and at the annual camp, which lasts 15 days.<sup>274</sup>

The article went on to specify the conditions of service for both officers and airmen. Thus, men who volunteered to join the AAF were supposed to be very aware of their

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<sup>273</sup>

TNA, AIR20/932, Auxiliary Air Force Reconstitution, “Note by the Secretary of State for Air”, 12<sup>th</sup> October 1945.

<sup>274</sup>

*Yorkshire Post*, November 7<sup>th</sup> 1946.

obligations towards the organisation and were fully cognisant of the nature and purpose of the establishment that they were volunteering to join. The social backgrounds of the officers ceased to carry the same weight as before, and this will be discussed in much more detail in the next chapter.

The changing technical demands of both flying and crewing aircraft became even more apparent when jet-engine aircraft became available to AAF squadrons in the late 1940s; aircraft which required large crews became obsolete and were replaced by single-seater fighters that needed high level technical skills and knowledge to operate. A direct consequence of these technical changes was the acceptance of men as pilots who were not officers.<sup>275</sup> Whilst the initial level of interest was overwhelming, the actual number of men who met the criteria for enlisting was disappointing and reflected the new recruitment restrictions placed on all squadrons. Selection of officers, NCOs and airmen became much more demanding with particular emphasis on previous experience and knowledge.

In 1948 the regular establishment of an auxiliary squadron stood at three officers, five NCOs and thirty three airmen, a total of forty one, although HQ Reserve Command had recently submitted a bid for this to be increased to sixty four.<sup>276</sup> These demands were relaxed in 1948 to allow any ex-servicemen to join the AAF in an effort to increase recruitment<sup>277</sup>. However, in many ways this action was too late to

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<sup>275</sup>

<sup>276</sup> *Flying Review*, August 17<sup>th</sup> 1948.

<sup>277</sup> Freeman, 'The Post-War Royal Auxiliary Air Force,' p100.

enable the AAF squadrons to benefit from the immediate post-war wave of enthusiasm which subsequently waned as men successfully re-entered civilian life.

Another significant factor in slowing down recruitment was the conditions of service, which required the attendance for twelve weekends and fifteen days at annual camp, as well as the completion of one hundred hours of non-continuous training. Many potential recruits could not meet this level of commitment. Volunteers had to be prepared to give up a significant amount of their free time in order to fulfil their obligations to the AAF.<sup>278</sup> For airmen, war-time aircrew categories and ground crew classifications were superseded by peace-time ones, sometimes requiring higher qualifications.<sup>279</sup> On 19<sup>th</sup> January 1948 a memo was sent to all AAF squadrons informing them that in recognition of their outstanding service in the Battle of Britain and in many of the other campaigns, King George VI had conferred upon the AAF, the pre-fix "Royal"<sup>280</sup> This title remained until all of the squadrons were disbanded in March 1957.

Recruiting by the end of March 1948 was at 39% of the establishment figures for the Royal Auxiliary Air Force (RAuxAF) across the country.<sup>281</sup> National attention turned to new conscripts who were being compelled by the National Service Act of 1948 to join

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<sup>278</sup> *North Eastern Daily Gazette*, March 15<sup>th</sup> 1948.

<sup>279</sup> Jefford, 'Post-War Reserves to 1960,' p89.

TNA, AIR20/932, Auxiliary Air Force Reconstitution, "Minute Sheet – Reserve Air Forces," D D B Ops, 23<sup>rd</sup> January 1946.

<sup>281</sup> TNA, AIR2/13172, "Memo from Air Ministry", 19<sup>th</sup> January 1948.

Freeman, 'The Post-War Royal Auxiliary Air Force,' p98.



H M Forces. Initially the time period of National Service was eighteen months but this was extended to two years following the outbreak of the Korean War in 1950. An agreement was made that 300 National Service conscripts would be selected for flying training each year and these men would fulfil their subsequent reserve obligation by either becoming members of the Volunteer Reserve or of an auxiliary squadron. In this way it was hoped that the poor number of recruits for the RAuxAF squadrons could be boosted.<sup>282</sup>

There was also an undercurrent of thought which was captured in 1949 by Air-Vice Marshal Douglas Macfadyen who was quoted as stating that he was very aware of the gulf that existed “between the man who can fly a modern fighter and the skilled pilot who can operate it effectively.”<sup>283</sup> These beliefs were compounded by poor overall recruiting figures, there were significant numbers of pilots, around 73% across England who had served in the AAF during the 1930s and were eager to continue flying, and wanted the opportunity to fly. Many were officers who had attained high ranks or had been decorated for their skill and bravery; others were NCOs who had been able to fly and had enjoyed successful careers. Members from both groups were very willing to re-join the RAuxAF as soon as it was re-formed, but these men were in the minority compared to the larger number of ex RAF personnel.

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<sup>282</sup>

Ibid, p99.

<sup>283</sup>

Freeman, ‘The Post-War Royal Auxiliary Air Force’, p100.

During the mid to late 1940s and throughout the 1950s the auxiliary squadrons struggled to recruit sufficient numbers to maintain efficiency. Indeed, there had been concern about their efficiency since they had been reformed in 1946. By 1948, The Minister of Labour appealed to young men and women to join one of the auxiliary or reserve forces. He also asked employers to give their employees all possible facilities.<sup>284</sup> Lord Pakenham, Minister of Civil Aviation urged more volunteers to come forward, stating that the RAuxAF still needed some 25,000 volunteers. He noted that the country would remain in danger, along with the rest of Europe, until Western Europe was very much stronger both economically and militarily.<sup>285</sup> In early 1949, Arthur Henderson, Secretary of State for Air, noted that to fit the squadrons of the RAuxAF for their role as part of the first line of Britain's defence they were to be re-equipped with jet fighters. He hoped that as a result of special measures to be taken this year a steadily increasing number of auxiliary pilots would be able to gain jet flying experience.<sup>286</sup>

The Auxiliary and Reserve Forces Bill was presented to the House of Commons on May 23<sup>rd</sup> 1949. "It is designed to extend the powers and duties of the territorial and auxiliary forces associations and to facilitate calling out reserve and auxiliary forces to meet either an actual or an apprehended attack upon the United Kingdom."<sup>287</sup> At the end of October 1949 the twenty fighter squadrons of the RAuxAF were

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<sup>284</sup>

*The Times*, September 24<sup>th</sup> 1948, p4.

<sup>285</sup>

*The Times*, October 29<sup>th</sup> 1948, p6.

<sup>286</sup>

*The Times*, February 3<sup>rd</sup> 1949, p3.

<sup>287</sup>

*The Times*, May 24<sup>th</sup> 1949, p2.

transferred to Fighter Command, which emphasized their place in the war-time front line defences of Great Britain. "Since their re-forming in 1946, the squadrons have been training and have now reached a sufficiently high standard to be transferred into the Command who would control them in a time of war."<sup>288</sup> Throughout this time, recruitment posters appeared regularly in *The Times*.

During March 1950, a new Air Ministry Scheme which enabled the 20 squadrons of the RAuxAF to have combined training with the regular fighter squadrons every month, was unveiled. This scheme would enable the auxiliaries to get the most out of their weekend flying by operating under conditions similar to war-time. Each auxiliary unit was affiliated to a regular squadron, and each auxiliary squadron would visit their regular station to help them gain a close understanding and develop a common operating system and technique. The pilots and ground crews would live on the RAF station during their training weekend. "For the auxiliary pilots, the greatest benefit will be that they become accustomed to being directed from the ground, which they cannot do unless they are operating under a Fighter Command sector control."<sup>289</sup>

Towards the end of 1953 a new pilot training scheme was announced to maintain the strength of the RAuxAF. Commanding Officers of auxiliary squadrons were able to select and recommend youths for aircrew training before their national service, if they were willing to transfer to the RAuxAF after completing their two year full-time service, Their pilot training would occupy nearly all of the period but the time and

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<sup>288</sup>

*The Times*, October 31<sup>st</sup> 1949, p4.

<sup>289</sup>

*The Times*, March 13<sup>th</sup> 1950, p2.

expense would be justified by their continued part-time service with an auxiliary service.<sup>290</sup>

## **National Service**

At the end of the Second World War, the General Election resulted in a Labour landslide victory, and a new Prime Minister Clement Attlee. One of his election promises was to quickly bring home and release over 5 million men who had fought in the various theatres of war. However, British forces were still involved in clashes in both Italy and Greece, as well as Malaya, Singapore and Hong Kong. These circumstances led to the Government to consider re-introducing conscription in the post-war world, to cope with the poor recruiting into the regular armed forces which could not plug the gap left by the huge number of skilled men who were being demobbed.

On 30<sup>th</sup> May 1946, a White Paper entitled National Service (Call-Up Scheme) was introduced which tentatively put forward the plans for national service which would be imposed across all of society, not just on public-spirited public schoolboys.<sup>291</sup> A great deal of debate took place primarily on the length of service, which was initially set at eighteen months full time service followed by 5 ½ years part-time service with the reserve. The National Service Act became law in May 1947. All men living in Britain were liable for national service between the ages of 18 and 26. In December

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<sup>290</sup>

*The Times*, September 4<sup>th</sup> 1953, p3.

<sup>291</sup>

Tom Hickman, *The Call-Up. A History of National Service*, (London, 2004) p3.

1948 the National Service Amendment Act came into force which maintained the eighteen months full time service, but reduced the part-time service to four years, furthermore, following the on-set of the Korean War in 1950, National Service was increased to two years full time service with 3 ½ years part-time service. Any young man who had a place at university, or who was completing professional articles or who had accepted an apprenticeship could defer their National Service until they had finished, however, the majority of those chose to do their National Service first before taking up their place. If the young man was going to Oxford or Cambridge University they were given no choice as the Oxbridge universities had agreed to take men only after their National Service was completed.<sup>292</sup>

Once the young man had registered for his National Service, he would have to attend for a medical which was conducted by a civilian panel of GP's, a basic intelligence test and a discussion with an interviewing officer. Tom Hickman in his *History of National Service* suggests that "the Battle of Britain lived on in the imagination of the wartime generation. Many still thought the RAF was the one to go for: discipline was known to be more relaxed than in the army, living conditions were better, and, all things considered, you were less likely to be shot at."<sup>293</sup> Moreover, "there were ways of increasing your chances of getting into the air force or navy. One was to belong to an appropriate cadet corps. Another was by training with the RAFVR or the RNVR."<sup>294</sup> In general terms, out of every one hundred men the army

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<sup>292</sup>

<sup>293</sup> Hickman, *The Call-Up*, pp4-5.

<sup>294</sup> Ibid, p3.

Hickman, *The Call-Up*, p3.

took seventy two, the Royal Air Force took twenty six and the Navy took two. One young man who was desperate to do his National Service as a pilot with the RAF felt that his interview had not gone well. "The examiner stood at the window, deep in thought. 'Look at that bloody sports car!' He suddenly yelled. Colin had parked the Allard in front of the building. 'It's mine' he said. 'Crikey! Well, if you can drive that you can certainly fly a plane,' he said and passed him right away."<sup>295</sup>

The National Service Act which came into force on 1<sup>st</sup> January 1949 imposed a liability for five and a half years' service, which was made up of two years' full time service and three and a half years part-time service. The Act was for young men between the ages of 17 and 21. Some men who served their National Service in the RAF went on to take a permanent job with them. Those who signed up to work as aircrew had to agree that after completion of their compulsory 2 year full-time service, their reserve service would be taken with the RAuxAF or the RAFVR. Part of the station commander's role was to ensure that National Service men were made fully aware of the opportunities for service in the RAuxAF and the RAFVR. Men were given the opportunity to visit their local RAuxAF station and to speak to the commanding officer. This process was meant to allow the smooth transition into the reserve forces following completion of their two year full time service.<sup>296</sup>

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<sup>295</sup>

<sup>296</sup> Ibid, p42.

TNA, Air 19/743, Royal Auxiliary Air Force, "Notes relating to the Auxiliary, Reserve and Cadet Forces," undated, p2.

Most men who wanted a commission in the air force wanted to be aircrew, with most of those wanting to be pilots.

The air force put their candidates through a rigorous examination at RAF Hornchurch that involved written papers, tests of perception and dexterity, eye-hand coordination and acuity of hearing, and a medical which was so tough they almost failed men who had a filling. The failure rate was high. 1,300 men out of the 6000 selected for aircrew training during the national service years failed to get their wings.<sup>297</sup>

Hickman suggests that National Service threw together men from all backgrounds and walks of life and helped to mobilise social change, however, he counters that suggestion by saying that potential officers were whisked away from the rest of the men as if they might be contaminated by the others, and that “getting a commission was all about having an acceptable accent.” In the National Service years the air force commissioned just over 9,000.<sup>298</sup> How much did National Service influence social change is difficult to say. Certainly if those wanting to be commissioned were kept away from the others men, then perhaps not. However, one thing that National Service did highlight is the considerably tougher process of being selected for officer training in the Royal Air Force which suggests perhaps that the old system of word of mouth and social status was no longer the key to a commission.

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<sup>297</sup>

<sup>298</sup> Hickman, *The Call-Up*, p44.

Ibid, p58.

## The Post-War Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve

The RAFVR was reconstituted after the war, with its role being defined as “providing a reserve of flying personnel (pilots, navigators, signallers, engineers and gunners) and of officers and airmen in certain ground branches and trades.”<sup>299</sup> It was also expected that the RAFVR would include, and indeed would largely consist of, personnel who had completed their period of compulsory national service and who were still liable to a statutory period of reserve service.<sup>300</sup> In April 1947 a revised set of regulations were approved by the King for the RAFVR. Officers would continue to wear the gilt “VR” badges on their collars whilst airmen would wear the cloth patches on their upper sleeve.<sup>301</sup> A new feature for the RAFVR was the introduction, in June 1947, of women pilots which had been approved by Philip Noel-Baker, Secretary of State, with a ceiling figure of 200.<sup>302</sup>

Immediately after the end of the Second World War, many regular and part-time pilots were keen to enlist in the RAFVR, and were signed up for a period of five years. However, there were never enough pilots and consequently, focus was turned to the National Service men. However, training to be awarded their wings took eighteen months, and in general, men were enlisted only for twelve months. For this reason, the Preliminary Flying Badge, which ensured that trainee pilots would be

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<sup>299</sup>

TNA, Air 19/743, Royal Auxiliary Air Force, Notes relating to the Auxiliary, Reserve and Cadet Forces, undated, p2.

<sup>301</sup> TNA, AIR2/13172, “Memo from Air Ministry”, 19<sup>th</sup> January 1948.

<sup>302</sup> Jefford, ‘Post-War RAF Reserves To 1960’ pp80-81.

Ibid, p81.



able to show their skills at a basic level, was introduced, and as time went on and the length of service for National Service men was increased to eighteen months, most pilots had reached a competent level. Furthermore, there were also VR women pilots who had a great deal of experience who would be able to demonstrate their proficiency at Preliminary Flying Badge and beyond.

It was hoped that a figure of 72,000 was going to be adequate for the Territorial Air Force with 60,000 being part of the RAFVR. The remaining 12,000 would be members of the RAuxAF, as mentioned earlier in the chapter. This figure of 60,000 would be made up of 20,000 flying personnel, which would include pilots, navigators, signallers, engineers and gunners. The remaining 40,000 would be made up from ground crew recruits. All of these recruits to the RAFVR would come from veterans who were just leaving the RAF at the end of the war.<sup>303</sup>

On 20<sup>th</sup> October 1947, Arthur Henderson, Secretary of State for Air said that “this was a difficult period in which to recruit men and women to the reserve forces because patriotic men and women were now putting forward their best efforts to help the country in the economic struggle,” that faced the country after the end of the war.

<sup>304</sup> This was followed up when it was announced that there would be a special campaign to bring the RAFVR up to strength because of the key positions which the fighter squadrons held in the defence of the country.<sup>305</sup> In February 1949 in the Air

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<sup>303</sup>

TNA, Air 19/743, Royal Auxiliary Air Force, Notes relating to the Auxiliary, Reserve and Cadet Forces, undated, p5.

<sup>305</sup> *The Times*, October 21<sup>st</sup> 1947, p3.

*The Times*, September 15<sup>th</sup> 1948, p5.

Estimates it was noted that the RAFVR was being developed and new centres for training were being opened.<sup>306</sup>

Mr A M Crawley, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Air opened the new No 81 Reserve Centre in London and spoke of the extent of the need for recruits in the RAFVR. It was hoped to enlist 35,000 recruits throughout the country, but the strength was 8500 in 1950. He specifically spoke of the need for tradesmen.<sup>307</sup> At least a further 3000 volunteers were asked for with the greatest need in London being for ground trades such as maintenance, signals and radar.<sup>308</sup> In the Defence Budget of 1952, three more flights were to be formed in the RAFVR at Fighter Command and four new types of training aircraft would be introduced into squadrons, two of which were jets, the Vampire T2 and the Canberra T4.<sup>309</sup>

Typical examples of recruiting posters from the 1950s highlight the need for airmen rather than pilots, and there are a selection of typical advertisements to reinforce the point.

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<sup>306</sup>

*The Times*, February 24<sup>th</sup> 1949, p4.

<sup>307</sup>

*The Times*, May 13<sup>th</sup> 1950, p6.

<sup>308</sup>

*The Times*, May 13<sup>th</sup> 1950, p6.

<sup>309</sup>

*The Times*, February 26<sup>th</sup> 1952, p3.

## 4 – Service with the R.A.F Volunteer Reserve (1948)



### Service with the **R.A.F. Volunteer Reserve**

**Who is eligible?** At present pilots, navigators and signallers who have gained their "wings" in the Services, and ground officers of certain branches who served with the R.A.F. during the war. Women pilots with at least 100 hours' solo flying may enrol on the W.A.A.F./V.R. list. Age limit for flying duties is 30, but exceptions can be made.

**What pay and allowance?** Pilots and navigators are paid an annual flying training bounty of £35 tax free, signallers £30 tax free, and women pilots £25 tax free. Pay and allowances at Air Force rates are paid to all reservists during continuous training of more than 48 hours. A tax free training expenses allowance of 1/6 an hour is paid for non-continuous training and travelling expenses are also allowed.

**How about cars and petrol?** Reservists who use their cars are given petrol coupons for duty attendances and there is a mileage allowance of 3d. a mile.

**What are the training commitments?** Training is done at a number of evenings and weekends each year and at an annual period of 15 days' continuous training; the 15 days' continuous training may be broken down into a number of shorter periods. As far as possible times of training will suit the convenience of the individual. For flying categories training includes at least 40 hours' flying each year. Officers of the ground branches have comparable training commitments.

**For further particulars:** Apply to the Commandant of your nearest Reserve Centre or to:

**The S.P.S.O.  
Reserve Command H.Q.  
R.A.F. White Waltham  
Berkshire.**

## **R.A.F.V.R.**

and **W.A.A.F.V.R.**

## 5 – Spare time (1948)

### V.R.

#### Target: 35,000

**MEN**—Age limits: 45 (Ground), 30-38 (flying). Engagement: 5 years. Bounty: £9 plus £3 for additional training (£35 for flying duties). Training: 15 days annual camp; up to 130 hours other training (30 hours for ground duties). Pay and allowances: Normal rates at annual camp, and hourly allowance for shorter periods of training.

**WOMEN**—Age limits: 45 (Ground), 30 (flying). Engagement: 2 years. Bounty: £6 plus £2 10s. for additional training (Flying £25). Training: 15 days annual camp; up to 130 hours other training (ground duties up to 30 hours). Pay and allowances: Normal W.A.A.F. rates at camp, and hourly allowance for shorter periods of training.


### AUXILIARY

#### Target: 25,000


**MEN**—Age limits: 50 (ground), 30 (flying). Engagement: 4 years (5 for officers). Bounty: £9 plus £3 for additional training (£35 for flying duties). Training: 15 days annual camp and up to 176 hours other training (78 hours for ground duties). Pay and allowances: Normal R.A.F. rates at camp, and an hourly allowance for shorter training periods.

**WOMEN**—Age limits: 38 (35 for officers). Engagement: 2 years. Bounty: £6 plus £2 10s. for additional training. Training: 15 days annual camp and up to 78 hours other training. Pay and allowances: Normal W.A.A.F. rates at camp, and an hourly allowance for shorter training periods.

### spare-time



### AIR CONTROL NEEDS GROUND CONTROL



There are vacancies for both men and women in your local AIR DEFENCE UNIT. Holdings of all spare-time positions are subject to change. See your local Recruiting Officer for details.

### full-time

#### — MEN —

**GROUND TRADES**—Age limits: 17½ to 32 years. Engagement: 5 or 12 years with no reserve service, or 8, 9 or 10 years with 4, 3, or 2 years reserve service respectively. Leave: 30 days annual basic, and 12 48-hour passes, 3 free travel warrants. Marriage allowance: 35s. a week.

**AIR CREW**—Age limits: 17½ to 24 years. Engagement: 8 years active 4 on Reserve. Commissions: If recruits pass flying training and are recommended, they will automatically receive a Commission. Leave: 30 days annual basic, plus 12 days during and after flying training and 12 48 hour passes


★

#### — BOYS —

**APPRENTICES**—Age Limits: 15½ to 17½. Engagements: 12 years from the age of 18. Leave: 42 days a year (in three periods), 3 free travel warrants. Trades: Training is recognized by the Amalgamated Engineering Union and the Electrical Trades' Union


**BOYS**—Age Limits: 15 to 17½. Engagement: 8, 9, 10 or 12 years active with Reserve service. Leave: 42 days a year, 3 free travel warrants

### they rely on me



### START YOUNG

for a skilled career



Apply RAF Recruiting Centre...

Air-Minded?

Join the

**R·A·F**

**Auxiliaries and Reserves**

Men and women who are keen on everything connected with flying (whether in the air or on the ground) are now invited to become part-time members of the Air Force; by joining the Royal Auxiliary Air Force or the Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve. Here is the perfect opportunity for pilots, navigators and signallers to keep their hands in; and for other enthusiasts to handle and maintain modern aircraft—at no cost to themselves. Altogether, there are over 100 different trades in these paid, spare-time Services.

- ★ **ROYAL AUXILIARY AIR FORCE** consists of Flying Squadrons, Regiment Squadrons (both, men only) and Fighter Control Units (men and women who man Britain's Radar chain). Each trains and operates as a complete, self-contained unit and would be mobilised as such.
- ★ **R.A.F. VOLUNTEER RESERVE**—pilots, navigators, signallers, ground crews (men and women) who train as individuals at the Reserve Centre nearest their homes.
- ★ **TRAINING** takes place in the evening, some week-ends and at annual camp (or an equivalent number of days at other times).
- ★ **PAY** is made up of tax-free bounties—airmen up to £12, airwomen £8 and special grants for aircrews; full day's pay and rations for 8 hours or more training: up to 9/- for less than 8 hours: 3d. a mile car allowance (and petrol coupons).

Write, asking for details of the branch that interests you, to Air Ministry (Dept. TM9X), Adastral House, Kingsway, London, W.C.2.

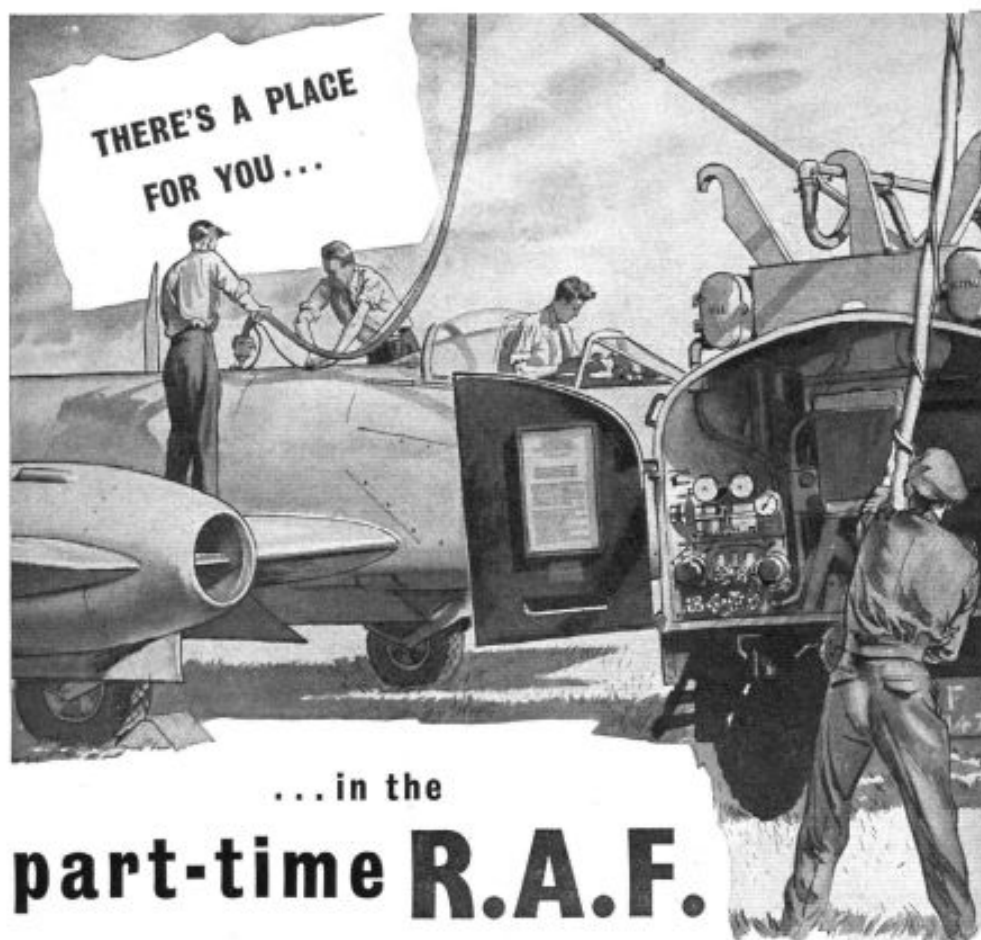


6 —  
Air-

Minded (1949)

312

312



## ...in the part-time **R.A.F.**

On odd evenings and at week-ends you'll find gathered together the men and women of the Royal Auxiliary Air Force and the Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve. They work in offices or factories during

the day — and then in their spare time learn to master the new equipment and weapons of the R.A.F. They're friendly people doing particularly vital work. Why don't you join them? They need you.

*Post the coupon now for full details of part-time service in your local unit.*

TO: ROYAL AIR FORCE (F.R. 75), VICTORY HOUSE, LONDON, W.C.2

*Please send particulars of part-time service in the R.A.F. (Applicants from British Isles only)*

NAME .....

ADDRESS .....

*(If ex-R.A.F. or ex-W.A.A.F. give rank, trade and No.)*

★ IF YOU ARE BETWEEN 14 AND 17—AND KEEN—JOIN THE A.T.C. ★

313

7 – There's a place for you in the part- time R.A.F (1950)



iv



**Managing directors  
are proud  
to be mechanics**

**... with these keen spare-time airmen\***

 The spirit of the men and women in the Royal Auxiliary Air Force and R.A.F. Volunteer Reserve is shown by the number who, holding important jobs, are well content to spend their spare time as members of these organisations. Whether they are ex-airmen glad to be back where they feel they belong, or "new boys" proud to be allowed to join, they are comrades in enthusiasm.

All of them—from the pilot with rows of ribbons to the youngster learning the secrets of radar—share the satisfaction of knowing they are helping to keep Britain "on top" in the air.

**\* Royal Auxiliary Air Force**  
**\* R.A.F. Volunteer Reserve**

**AUXILIARIES.** *Flying and Regiment Squadrons (men); Air Observation Post Units (men); Fighter Control Units (men and women). These train as complete units on their local R.A.F. stations.*

**RESERVES.** *Air and ground staff (men and women) who carry out non-continuous training at the Reserve Centre nearest their homes. Flying training is done at nearby Reserve Flying Schools.*

TO: AIR MINISTRY, (DEPT. PU 63A.), ADASTRAL HOUSE, LONDON, W.C.2

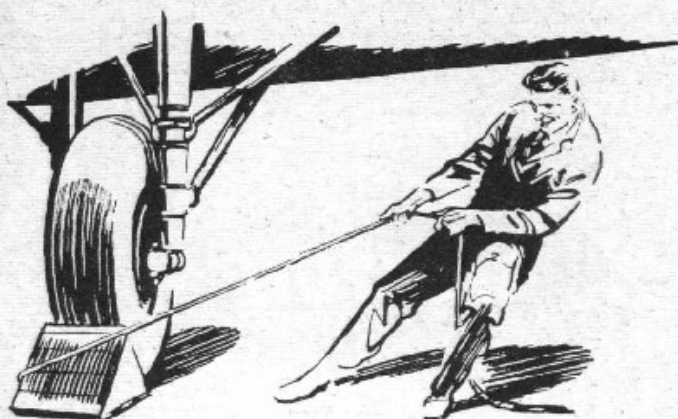
*Please send full information (pay, bounty, travelling allowances, uniform, etc.) about R.A.F. Auxiliaries and Reserves. (If ex-R.A.F. or ex-W.A.A.F., give Rank, Trade, No.)*

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_



You don't  
have to fly  
to join



... these keen spare-time airmen ★



Membership of the R.A.F. Auxiliaries or Reserves is by no means restricted to men and women who fly. For without the ground staff there would be no flying. That is why so many keen men and women volunteer for ground trades. They enjoy spending their spare time demonstrating their ability as skilled technicians and organisers. They are well-satisfied to know they are helping to strengthen Britain's influence for peace.

## ★ Royal Auxiliary Air Force

## ★ R.A.F. Volunteer Reserve

**AUXILIARIES.** *Flying and Regiment Squadrons (men); Air Observation Post Units (men); Fighter Control Units (men and women). These train as complete units on their local R.A.F. stations.*

**RESERVES.** *Aircrew and ground staff (men and women) who carry out non-continuous training at the Reserve Centre nearest their homes. Flying training is done at nearby Reserve Flying Schools.*

TO: AIR MINISTRY (DEPT. F.R. 64), ADASTRAL HOUSE, LONDON, W.C.2

Please send full information (pay, bounty, travelling allowances, uniform, etc.) about R.A.F. Auxiliaries and Reserves. (If ex-R.A.F. or ex-W.A.A.F., give Rank, Trade, No.)

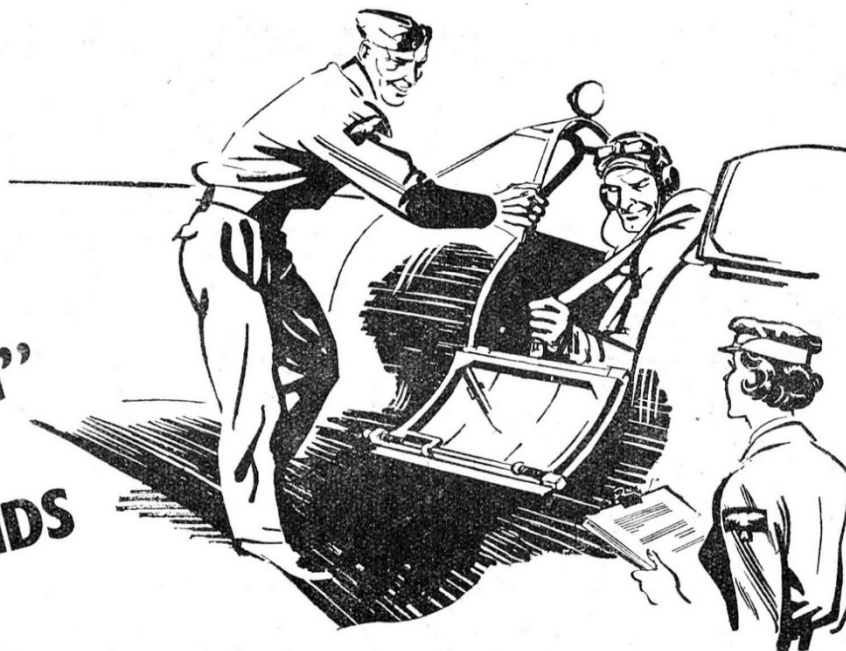
NAME .....

ADDRESS .....





**SPEND  
"FLYING"  
WEEK-ENDS**



**... with these keen spare-time airmen\***



Did you wear pilot's, navigator's or signaller's wings? If so you may spend your week-ends (and other spare time) in the air — by joining the R.A.F. Auxiliaries or Reserves. You are paid and receive allowances at current R.A.F. rates. You get an annual training bounty of £35. You have the additional satisfaction of knowing you are "doing your bit — and a bit more". "Flying" week-ends and Annual Summer Camp are also shared by the part-time ground staff who have the fine and responsible job of keeping the Squadrons in the sky.

## **★ Royal Auxiliary Air Force**

## **★ R.A.F. Volunteer Reserve**

### **ROYAL AUXILIARY AIR FORCE**

*Flying and Regiment Squadrons (men); Air Observation Post Units (men); Fighter Control Units (men and women). These train as complete units on their local R.A.F. stations.*

### **ROYAL AIR FORCE VOLUNTEER RESERVE**

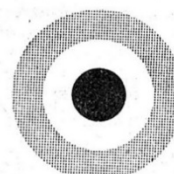
*Aircrew and ground staff (men and women) who train at the Reserve Centre nearest their homes.*

TO : AIR MINISTRY (DEPT. A.P.62), ADASTRAL HOUSE, LONDON, W.C.2

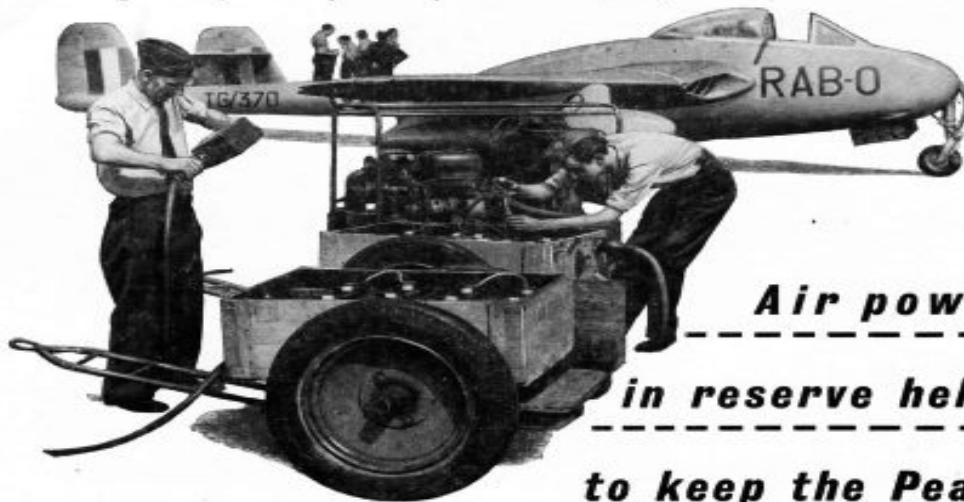
*Please send details of  
R.A.F. Auxiliaries  
and Reserves. (If ex-  
R.A.F. give Rank,  
Trade, Number.)*

NAME .....

ADDRESS .....



Do a grand job in your spare time . . .



***Air power  
in reserve helps  
to keep the Peace***

Air power is Britain's first line of defence. An efficient, highly trained reserve force, proud of its ability to back up the regular R.A.F., is the best deterrent to would-be aggressors. Men and women who believe that our strength in the air ensures peace are needed now to help maintain the proud status of the R.A.F. Auxiliaries and Reserves as the finest spare-time air force in the world.

Join the

### ROYAL AUXILIARY AIR FORCE

Flying squadrons (fighter and air observation post) (men), light ack-ack Regiment squadrons (men) and Fighter Control Radar Units (men and women) which train as self-contained city or county units.

### R.A.F. VOLUNTEER RESERVE

Men and women for aircrew or ground duties train at local Reserve Centres and Flying Schools as individuals at times which can be varied to suit personal requirements.

★ If you are between 14 and 17—and keen—join the AIR TRAINING CORPS ★

TO: ROYAL AIR FORCE (G.R. 66C)  
VICTORY HOUSE, LONDON.  
W.C. 2.

Please send details (pay, allowances, uniform, etc.) of R.A.F. Auxiliaries and Reserves. If ex-R.A.F. or ex-W.R.A.F. please give rank, trade and No.

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_



Applicants from U.K. only

11 —

Do a

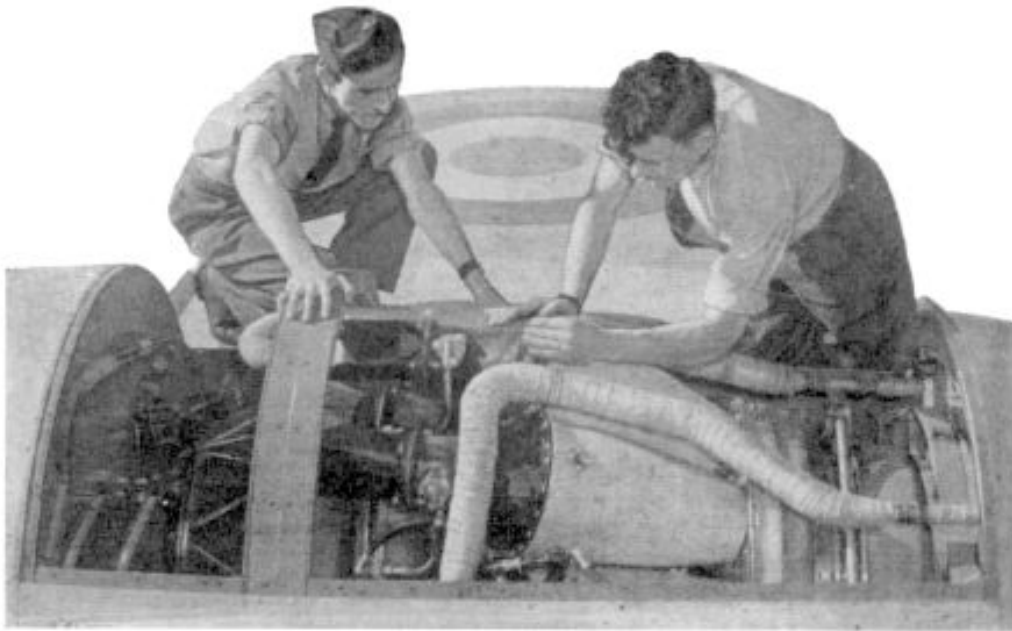
grand job in your spare time (1950)

317

*The Times*, June 23<sup>rd</sup> 1950, p3.

317

*Flight*, December 22<sup>nd</sup> 1950, p11.



## Help keep Britain "ON TOP" in the air

To keep Britain 'on top' in the air is to safeguard world peace. That is a responsibility not only of the R.A.F. but also of its Auxiliaries and Reserves, the men and women who choose to spend a little of their spare time serving so great an end. If you are both air-minded and peace-minded, you will find this a grand part-time job. It is at once exciting and rewarding.

### ROYAL AUXILIARY AIR FORCE

Flying squadrons (fighter and air observation post) (men and women), light ack-ack Regiment Squadrons (men), and Fighter Control (radar) Units (men and women) which train as self-contained city or county units.

*Certain Auxiliaries and Reservists do their summer training overseas*

### R.A.F. VOLUNTEER RESERVE

For aircrew or ground duties (men and women) who train at local Reserve Centres and Flying Schools as individuals



TO: AIR MINISTRY (F.R.658) ADASTRAL HOUSE, LONDON, W.C.2  
Please send details (pay, allowances, uniform, etc.) of R.A.F. Auxiliaries and Reserves.

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

*Experience not essential but ex-R.A.F. men and women especially welcome.  
(If ex-R.A.F. give Rank, Trade and No.)*

If you are  
between 14  
and 17—and  
keen—join  
the  
**AIR  
TRAINING  
CORPS**

12 – Help keep Britain "on top" in the air (1951)

318

318

*Flight*, 4<sup>th</sup> January 1951, p17.

**There's a place for YOU**



By volunteering now for part-time service with the Royal Air Force you will be helping to meet one of Britain's most urgent needs: a trained reserve of men and women on whom it can count in an emergency.

If you want to fly, here is your opportunity to get the best possible training. If your interests are in ground jobs, you will find you are able to do vital work that gives you useful new skills or improves old ones. But whether you choose to serve in the air or on the ground the close association with the Royal Air Force will give you new experiences and fresh companionship that you can gain in no other way. And you will have that supreme satisfaction of knowing that you, at least, have shown your awareness of the urgency of the times we live in. Send for full particulars now.

**... in the**

**part-time**

**R.A.F.**

TO: ROYAL AIR FORCE (F.R.67) VICTORY HOUSE, LONDON, W.C.2.

*Please send particulars of part-time service with the R.A.F.  
(Applicants from British Isles only)*

NAME .....

ADDRESS .....

AGE .....

*(If ex-R.A.F. or W.A.A.F. please give rank, trade and number).*

★ If you are between 14 and 17 — and keen — join the AIR TRAINING CORPS ★



13 – There's a place for you in the part-time R.A.F (1951)



... in the  
***part-time* R.A.F.**

Much has been said and written about the week-end flyers of the pre-war R.Aux.A.F. and R.A.F.V.R. They and their ground crews—particularly in the tense, uncertain days of the Battle of Britain—helped to make possible our way of life today. To keep this life intact we still need week-end airmen. Why don't you become one of them?

**POST THE COUPON NOW FOR FULL DETAILS  
 OF PART-TIME SERVICE IN YOUR LOCAL UNIT**

TO : ROYAL AIR FORCE (F.R.74), VICTORY HOUSE, LONDON, W.C.2

*Please send particulars of part-time service in the R.A.F. (Applicants from British Isles only)*

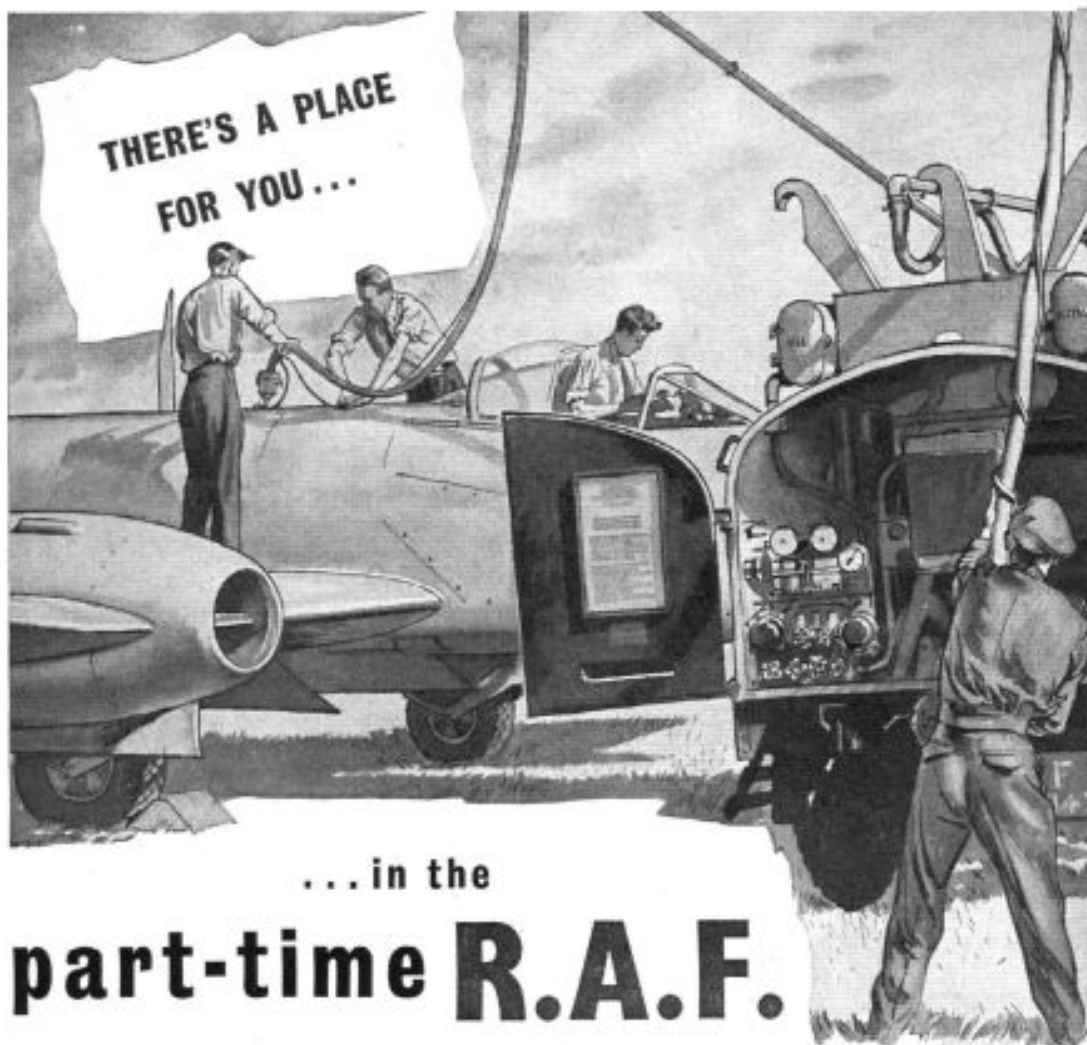
NAME.....

ADDRESS.....

*(If ex-R.A.F. or ex-W.A.A.F. give rank, trade and No.)*

★ IF YOU ARE BETWEEN 14 AND 17—AND KEEN—JOIN THE A.T.C. ★

320 14 – There's a place for you in the part-time R.A.F (1952)



## ...in the part-time R.A.F.

On odd evenings and at week-ends you'll find gathered together the men and women of the Royal Auxiliary Air Force and the Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve. They work in offices or factories during

the day — and then in their spare time learn to master the new equipment and weapons of the R.A.F. They're friendly people doing particularly vital work. Why don't you join them? They need you.

*Post the coupon now for full details of part-time service in your local unit.*

TO: ROYAL AIR FORCE (F.R.75), VICTORY HOUSE, LONDON, W.C.2

*Please send particulars of part-time service in the R.A.F. (Applicants from British Isles only)*

NAME.....

ADDRESS.....

*(If ex-R.A.F. or ex-W.A.A.F. give rank, trade and No.)*

★ IF YOU ARE BETWEEN 14 AND 17—AND KEEN—JOIN THE A.T.C. ★

321

15 – There's a place for you in the part-time R.A.F (1952)

321

*Flight*, 19<sup>th</sup> September 1952, p2.





**BERLIN 1943**

**Yes — back on a part-time basis**

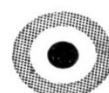
**and BACK 1953**



Part-time in the R.A.F. ? Is there such a thing ? But of course ! In the Royal Auxiliary Air Force and the Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve, hundreds of ex-R.A.F. men and women who found they were missing the old friendships are back on the job part-time. At weekends and at summer camps they keep abreast of new developments, learn new techniques, meet old friends.

What so many people don't realise is that the R.A.F. really needs part-timers ; can't do without them. By coming back — on a part-time basis — you'll be doing a good turn to yourself and your country. Write for details to Royal Air Force (F.R.76), Victory House, London, W.C.2.

**There's a place for you in the R.A.F. . part-time**



<sup>322</sup> 16 — Berlin 1943 and back 1953 (1953)

<sup>322</sup>

*Flight*, March 27<sup>th</sup> 1953.

Each recruitment advertisement promotes a slightly different message. Illustration number 4 dated July 15<sup>th</sup> 1948 is very formal and is specifically aimed at those ex-service personnel who want to join the RAFVR, stating “At present, pilots, navigators and signallers who have gained their wings in the services, and ground officers of certain branches who served with the RAF during the war are eligible.”<sup>323</sup> It moves on to inform prospective recruits what pay and allowances that they would expect to receive, and also any allowances for using their own vehicle. Finally it moves on to explain the training commitments, and explains who to contact for details, should someone reading the advert be interested in joining.

Illustration number 5, which dates from August 1948 targets two groups of readers. Firstly, those who want to do some spare time flying as qualified pilots in the RAFVR, and secondly, those who might be interested in working in the RAuxAF as ground control within the Air Defence Unit. It is split into four distinct areas, and again presents a significant amount of information for those who might be interested in joining. The first two quarters show the 35,000 recruitment target for the RAFVR, and the 25,000 target for the RAuxAF, and then presents the age limits for joining, the period of engagement, training commitment and pay and allowances for each group. The opposite side of the advert presents the full-time opportunities for both men and boys, and again presents a significant amount of information from age limits to leave, for those who might be interested in a full time career in the RAF.<sup>324</sup>

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<sup>323</sup>

<sup>324</sup> *Flight*, July 15<sup>th</sup> 1948.

*Flying Review*, August 17<sup>th</sup> 1948.



Illustration number 6 is aimed at the “air-minded” Auxiliaries and the Reserves. It points out that “here is the perfect opportunity for pilots, navigators and signallers to keep their hands in; and for other enthusiasts to handle and maintain modern aircraft – at no cost to themselves.”<sup>325</sup> It then moves on to list several of the different trades open to people within both the Auxiliaries and the Reserves, following on with training commitment and pay.<sup>326</sup>

During 1950, five different advertisements were used to try to encourage recruitment within the RAuxAF and the RAFVR. These adverts took a slightly different approach by presenting a drawing of some aspect of work within the RAF Reserves. Illustration number 7, used in January 1950 shows an aeroplane which is being refuelled from a petrol bowser, and features one man working with the bowser, two men refuelling and one man in the pilot’s seat. It does not give a great deal of information about pay and training commitment. Instead it takes a completely different approach by appealing in a different way to those who might wish to join:

on odd evenings and at week-ends you’ll find gathered together the men and women of the Royal Auxiliary Air Force and the Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve. They work in offices or factories during the day – and then in their spare time learn to master the new equipment of

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<sup>325</sup>

*The Times*, January 19<sup>th</sup> 1949, p6.

<sup>326</sup>

*Ibid*, p6.

the RAF. They're friendly people doing particularly vital work. Why don't you join them? They need you.<sup>327</sup>

This is followed by Illustration number 8 which is aimed at the more senior executives in civilian life, showing a picture of two men and a woman in discussion with an aircraft in the background, with the slogan "Managing directors are proud to be mechanics with these keen spare-time airmen."<sup>328</sup> It goes on to say:

The spirit of the men and women in the Royal Auxiliary Air Force and the RAF Volunteer Reserve is shown by the numbers who, holding important jobs are well content to spend their spare time as members of these organisations. Whether they are ex-servicemen glad to be back where they feel they belong, or new boys proud to be allowed to join, they are all comrades in enthusiasm. All of them – from the pilot with rows of ribbons to the youngster learning the secrets of radar – share the satisfaction of knowing they are helping to keep Britain "on top" in the air.<sup>329</sup>

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<sup>327</sup>

*Flight*, January 27<sup>th</sup> 1950, p23.

<sup>328</sup>

*The Times*, March 4<sup>th</sup> 1950, p4.

<sup>329</sup>

*Ibid*, p4.

This advert appealed to the patriotism of the reader. Illustration number 9 which appears in May 1950 again has a picture on it of a member of a ground crew pulling the chocks away from an aircraft wheel. It is aimed at those men who do not wish to fly, which makes it different from the previous advertisements. It states:

Membership of the RAF Auxiliaries or Reserves is by no means restricted to men and women who fly. For without the ground staff there would *be* no flying. That is why so many keen men and women volunteer for ground trades. They enjoy spending their spare time demonstrating their ability as skilled technicians and organisers. They are well satisfied to know they are helping to strengthen Britain's influence for peace.<sup>330</sup>

Illustration number 10 from June 1950 features a pilot sitting in his cockpit talking to an airman on his wing and a Women's Auxiliary Air Force (WAAF) holding a clipboard. The heading is "Spend flying weekends with these keen spare-time airmen."<sup>331</sup> It then Moves on to say:

Did you wear pilot's, navigator's or signaller's wings? If so you may spend your weekends (and other spare time) in the air – by joining the RAF Auxiliaries or Reserves. You are paid and receive allowances at

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<sup>330</sup>

*Flight*, 11<sup>th</sup> May 1950, p25.

<sup>331</sup>

*The Times*, June 23<sup>rd</sup> 1950, p3.

current RAF rates. You get an annual training bounty of £35. You have the additional satisfaction of knowing you are “doing your bit – and a bit more”. Flying weekends and annual summer camp are also shared by the part-time ground staff who have the fine and responsible job of keeping the squadrons in the air.<sup>332</sup>

The final recruiting advertisement for 1950 is illustration number 11 which was used in December of that year and asked people to “do a grand job in your spare time”<sup>333</sup> The advertisement uses a picture of a ground crew working on some equipment with a jet aircraft in the background, noting that:

Air power in reserve helps to keep the peace. An efficient highly trained reserve force; proud of its ability to back up the regular RAF is the best deterrent to would be aggressors. Men and women who believe that our strength in the air ensures peace are needed now to help maintain the proud status of the RAF.<sup>334</sup>

All of the advertisements of 1950 work hard to put forward the view that Britain has the best air force and its role is to ensure peace is maintained. They appeal to both men and women alike in trying to persuade them that for people from all walks of life,

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<sup>332</sup>

Ibid, p3.

<sup>333</sup>

*Flight*, December 22<sup>nd</sup> 1950, p11.

<sup>334</sup>

Ibid, p11.

there is a place for them in the RAF Reserves, where they can use their spare time in a constructive and productive way.

Two recruiting posters were used in 1951. Illustration number 12 appeared in January of that year and shows a picture of two men on top of an aircraft working on the engine, with the headline “Help keep Britain “*on top*” in the air.”<sup>335</sup> It then moves on to state that:

to keep Britain “on top” in the air is to safeguard world peace. That is a responsibility not only of the RAF, but also of its Auxiliaries and Reserves, the men and women who choose to spend a little of their spare-time serving so great an end. If you are both air-minded and peace-minded, you will find this a grand part-time job. It is at once exciting and rewarding.<sup>336</sup>

The second poster, illustration number 13 appears in March 1951 and shows a picture of a pilot in full flying gear standing next to an aircraft, with a pencilled in pilot and an arrow pointing to him stating “there’s a place for you in the part-time RAF.”<sup>337</sup> This poster puts forward the importance of volunteering to undertake the

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<sup>335</sup>

*Flight*, 4<sup>th</sup> January 1951, p17.

<sup>336</sup>

*Flight*, 4<sup>th</sup> January 1951, p17.

<sup>337</sup>

*Flight* 23<sup>rd</sup> March 1951, p28.

vital work of the RAF Reserves, which will enable the applicant to learn useful new skills and to improve existing ones. It also points out that:

whether you choose to serve in the air or on the ground the close association with the Royal Air Force will give you new experiences and fresh companionship that you can gain in no other way.<sup>338</sup>

As in the posters of 1950, both of the recruitment posters for 1951 use similar ways to gain the interest of the reader, and to make them see how important they are to the security and safety of Great Britain.

Two posters appeared in 1952. The first, illustration number 14, which appeared in *Flight* magazine in June shows an airman guiding an airman driving a tractor which is pulling a jet aircraft out of a hanger. It states:

Much has been said and written about the week-end flyers of the pre-war RAuxAF and RAFVR. They and their ground crews – particularly in the tense uncertain days of the Battle of Britain – helped to make possible our way of life today. To keep this life intact we still need week-end airmen. Why don't you become one of them?<sup>339</sup>

The second one, illustration number 15 appeared in September 1952, and is exactly the same one that appeared in January 1950, with the petrol bowser and the men

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<sup>338</sup>

Ibid, p28.

<sup>339</sup>

*Flight*, 27<sup>th</sup> June 1952, p9.

refuelling the aircraft. It has the same text, ending with: “they’re friendly people doing particularly vital work. Why don’t you join them? They need you.”<sup>340</sup> The adverts attract recruits by offering them something interesting to do with their spare time.

The final advert, illustration number 16 appeared in *Flight* magazine in March 1953 and shows two photographs the first one with the caption “Berlin 1943”, the second with the caption “and back 1953.”<sup>341</sup> This poster highlights the “hundreds of ex-RAF men and women who found they were missing the old friendships are back on the job part-time. At week-ends and summer camps they keep abreast of new techniques and meet old friends.”<sup>342</sup> So continues to push forward ideas of comradeship and importance.

It is clear that the RAF used many different ways of trying to recruit members to the RAuxAF and the RAFVR. However, the recruiting figures show that these advertisements were not particularly successful in their job and that could be down to post-war apathy, or the fact that those personnel who had served in the RAF during the Second World War, felt that they had done their bit and did not want to consider re-joining, even on a part time basis. In June 1947 It was noted by Sir Basil Embry, Commander in Chief of Fighter Command between 1949 and 1953, that the RAuxAF was “living off the fat” which was represented by the post-war veterans who had

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<sup>340</sup>

*Flight*, 19<sup>th</sup> September 1952, p2.

<sup>341</sup>

*Flight* 27<sup>th</sup> March 1953, p11.

<sup>342</sup>

*Flight*, 27<sup>th</sup> March 1953, p11.

joined the RAuxAF in 1946 straight after the end of the war. He pointed out that the RAF needed to face up to the fact that by 1951 at the very latest, this stock of men would have effectively run out and therefore the RAuxAF would have to start using recruits with little or no previous experience, and that coupled with their lesser attendance and training, was likely to create problems for the organisation as a whole.<sup>343</sup> Moreover, what is apparent from analysing these advertisements is that the focus of the recruiting campaign is on airmen not officers. Since flying was seen by many as the more exciting part of the RAF, there was less difficulty recruiting those men who wanted to fly. It would seem that the people needed in large numbers were the tradesmen and in many ways the key recruiting problems lay here. Neither RAuxAF nor the RAFVR were ever at full establishment strength, and this was due to the lack of airmen, not the lack of pilots.

### **University Air Squadrons**

These squadrons were established within the framework of the RAFVR at seventeen universities. "Their purpose, to promote the flow of candidates for commissions in the regular, reserve and auxiliary air forces; to stimulate interest in air matters; and to promote and maintain liaison with the universities in technical and research problems affecting aviation."<sup>344</sup> In 1946 the Air Ministry had realised the value of the UAS in terms of its training of pilots, which were a great source of recruits to the RAF.

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<sup>343</sup>

Freeman, 'The Post-War Royal Auxiliary Air Force', p99.

<sup>344</sup>

Wing Commander Gerry Margiotta, 'University Air Squadrons In WWII' *Royal Air Force Reserve and Auxiliary Forces*, (Oxford, 2003) p77.



the purpose of the University Air Squadrons is to provide training during their university career for members of the universities who wish to prepare themselves for commissioned service in the General Duties branch and the Technical branch of the regular or non-regular air forces.<sup>345</sup>

This shows that the emphasis of the UAS had switched from 'air-mindedness' prior to World War II to that of recruiting officers as part of their role within the RAFVR. By 1947, fourteen UASs had been formed, in comparison with the three UASs that had existed before the war, (Cambridge UAS, University of London Air Squadron and Oxford UAS.) This figure remained the same and in many ways was not particularly affected by the reduction of manpower which affected other areas of the RAF. Recruits were taught to fly at civil flying schools and after completing their degrees, were able to apply directly to the RAF College Cranwell to complete their training. Changes in technology meant that the aircraft which were used for flying training were obsolete, and in 1950 they were replaced by the de Havilland Chipmunk, which became the standard training aircraft for the RAF between 1950 and the early 1970s.<sup>346</sup>

As a result of being in a UAS, recruits were given the opportunity to experience what life in the Royal Air Force would be like and it would ensure a ready supply of officer candidates for the Royal Air Force.<sup>347</sup> Those who decided to join a UAS would be

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<sup>345</sup>

<sup>346</sup> Ibid, p77.

<sup>347</sup>

Margiotta, 'University Air Squadrons in WWII,' p77.

<sup>347</sup>

expected to attend training nights which took place during week nights, and also to attend the annual summer camp. Each recruit had to follow the same flying syllabus which involved the recruit undertaking some 31 flying sorties so that they were in a position to achieve between ten and fifteen hours of flying. Moreover, the training was built upon with both ground training and adventure training. Once the student pilot had completed the Core Syllabus they were then able to receive the award of the Preliminary Flying Badge, or 'Budgie Wings.' However, each student was expected to reach solo standard before the end of their second year on the squadron.<sup>348</sup>

Apart from flying, UASs also followed a Ground Training syllabus which included attending Adventure Training expeditions, both overseas and within the UK, learning drill, undertaking a field craft exercise, understanding the principles of air power and developing leadership skills. However, the emphasis and priority remained on flying as the core function of each UAS. UAS Officer Cadets were required to participate in a minimum amount of training: one training night a week during the university term which usually entailed a guest speaker presenting on an aspect of the RAF or the military to develop service knowledge; and a two-week period of continuous training in the summer. Most squadrons also offered camps at Easter, Christmas, and September for Officer Cadets to undertake intensive blocs of sport, flying and adventure training. Additionally, students were offered a limited number of week-long Summer Vacation Attachment at another RAF base, where they were seconded to

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Royal Air Force, History of the University Air Squadrons. Available at: <http://www.raf.mod.uk/universityairsquadrons/history/> Viewed 20<sup>th</sup> October 2014.

<sup>348</sup>

an active regular RAF unit to learn more about their role.<sup>349</sup> Candidates were also expected to participate in inter-UAS sports competitions and adventure training expeditions, in sports such as The UAS Rugby 7s, hockey, rowing, and shooting. Additionally there were frequent squadron expeditions in areas such as the Lake District., which included rock climbing and canoeing.<sup>350</sup>

### **The end of the Royal Auxiliary Air Force**

In 1953 the “Baker-Carr Report”, written by Air Commodore John Baker-Carr, stated that because of the limited amount of flying time that was available to an auxiliary pilots, future aeroplanes would be too complex for them to fly proficiently and the squadrons would therefore have to be manned by ex-regulars. Furthermore, Baker-Carr believed that the auxiliary squadrons should all be disbanded.<sup>351</sup> In 1954 the swept-wing supersonic fighter was created and the argument was put forward that

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<sup>349</sup>

Interview with Mr Alan Taylor, (Former member of Queens University Air Squadron), 2<sup>nd</sup> November 2014.

<sup>350</sup>

Interview with Mr Noel Mitchel, (Former member of Queens University Air Squadron), 31<sup>st</sup> October 2014.

<sup>351</sup>

Jefford, ‘Post-War Reserves to 1960’ p93.

since the nation was hard pressed to maintain its regular forces, the cost of new aircraft was so great that it would be cheaper to re-equip the fighter defence if there were less pilots. Harold Macmillan as Defence Minister gained the nickname “Mac the Knife” in tribute to the sweeping defence cuts he proposed as a solution to Britain’s economic malaise. He announced that it would not be possible, or indeed right, for auxiliaries to switch to the expensive new machines, a necessity if they were to remain in the front line of defence. He added that the government had decided to alter the organisation of this force to enable those Auxiliary pilots who could give their time to it to train on the swept-wing aircraft themselves as individuals; not to equip the squadrons with these machines, but to train the men. By this means they would provide reserves behind the regular squadrons in war. Thus, the role of the RAuxAF was questioned and three areas were scrutinised. Firstly, RAuxAF fighter squadrons were called up for three months training in 1951 to prepare them for the Korean War. This upset many employers and the RAuxAF were never called out again. Secondly, when the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) was formed in 1949, the Air Ministry had declared all twenty auxiliary squadrons to be fully combat capable, but by 1953 they were no longer regarded as front-line units. Finally, people were increasingly giving way to advanced technology.<sup>352</sup>

By 1954 the Air Council and the Auxiliary and Reserve Forces Committee were trying to find ways to sustain the flying squadrons; updating their aircraft was considered a possibility, as was reducing the number of squadrons from twenty to

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<sup>352</sup>

fifteen, however, aircraft technology was so advanced that it was not considered viable to give new aircraft to the RAuxAF squadrons. By mid-1955 the Air Ministry was under increasing pressure to save money and the possibility was again discussed of disbanding the AAF squadrons.<sup>353</sup> By 1956, the Suez affair had strengthened the case for disbandment because of the drain on Britain's gold and dollar reserves. Some newspapers, and particularly those associated with Max Aitken, the former post-war Commanding Officer of 601 Squadron who ran the *Sunday Express*, began to leak details of total disbandment. No official comment came from the authorities resulting in protracted discussion in the press. However, in 1957 there was a major review of defence policy that culminated with a White Paper in 1957 from the Minister of Defence, Duncan Sandys. This was announced in the aftermath of the Suez crisis and showed a major shift in defence policy by enforcing massive cuts in the number of troops and by increasing the dependence of the United Kingdom on nuclear technology. Furthermore, the disbandment of the AAF squadrons would save money immediately. It was decided - "the most effective deterrents for the United Kingdom were V Bombers and surface to air missiles."<sup>354</sup>

The RAuxAF leaders tried to fight the decision and formed a committee of the four metropolitan areas of London, composed of Squadron Leader, John Cormack of 600 Squadron who was an Esso executive, Tommy Turnbull of 604 Squadron who was a Lloyd's underwriter, Bob Eeles of 615 Squadron who was an ICI executive and Peter

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<sup>353</sup>

Jefford, 'Post-War Reserves to 1960' p96.

<sup>354</sup>

David Brown, *Thornaby Aerodrome and Wartime Memories*, (Stockton on Tees, 1992) p59.

Edelston of 601 Squadron, an advertising executive.<sup>355</sup> The aim of the committee was to try to educate people in the role of the RAuxAF in the hope that public opinion could stop the disbandment. They made a television appearance at the Pathfinders' Club in Knightsbridge and answered questions from the BBC air correspondent. They wrote to all Members of Parliament and all national and provincial newspapers. Their letter was therefore published all over the country, highlighting their concern that

the country is throwing away an organisation whose worth is far greater than its face value, employing people whose time is spent productively five days a week and two days a week in the service of the crown. There is no doubt that the Royal Air Force is short of pilots, and disbanding the Auxiliary fighter squadrons means that the country will lose over 300 fully-trained fighter pilots, and in addition more than 2,000 ground crew.<sup>356</sup>

501 Squadron's CO, Squadron Leader Collings wrote to a local newspaper to present his case against the Air Ministry.

This is an absolute tragedy. They are throwing away a terrific enthusiasm that has always been the keynote of the Auxiliaries. Farmers, airline pilots, bricklayers, bank clerks, printers and railway

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<sup>355</sup>

Hans Onderwater, *Gentlemen in Blue. 600 Squadron*, (Barnsley, 1997), p365.

<sup>356</sup>

Tom Moulson, *The Flying Sword, the Story of 601 Squadron*, (London, 1964), p178.

workers, who give up their weekends to fly or service the aircraft, working and learning with a rare devotion. Now the thirty officers and seventy five airmen of 501 Squadron must hang up their flying boots.<sup>357</sup>

As no official comment could be wrung from the authorities, a flood of letters took up the case for the part-timers. Some positive, but others breathing a sigh of relief that the petrol wasting joy riders would leave them in weekend peace. "They have made mincemeat of my nerves with their power dives over my chimney pots, and I've grown so tired of ducking every few minutes while trying to dig in my garden."<sup>358</sup> In response someone pointed out that "my heart bleeds for Mr H, he might feel better if he were to go up to the Abbey, look through the Book of Remembrance, and take note of the number of Auxiliary Air Force men who gave their lives for us. They had all been joy-riding young men at weekends."<sup>359</sup>

They lobbied MPs and were always received with goodwill and sympathy, but effectively they were beaten. In January 1957, the announcement was made by the Minister of Defence stating that the RAuxAF was to be disbanded on 10<sup>th</sup> March of that year. The Air Ministry Notice stated that:

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<sup>357</sup>

David Watkins, *Fear Nothing. The History of No 501 (County of Gloucester) Fighter Squadron, Royal Auxiliary Air Force*, (Cowden, 1990), p93.

<sup>358</sup>

Tom Moulson, *The Millionaires Squadron. The Remarkable Story of 601 Squadron and the Flying Sword*, (Barnsley, 2014 ) p206.

<sup>359</sup>

Ibid, p206

In view of the magnificent war record of the auxiliary fighter squadrons, which fully justified the hopes of those responsible for the formation of the Auxiliary Air Force, this decision has been taken with the deepest possible regret.....with the growing cost of equipment it has become clear that the auxiliary fighter squadrons could not be retained, even with their present aircraft, at the expense of the regular units which must be regarded as of higher priority.<sup>360</sup>

Thus, the main reason given was partly on operational and partly on economic grounds. Operationally it was argued that it was unrealistic to expect weekend fliers to be able to operate complex modern aircraft. Economically, the cost of training, maintaining the aircraft and keeping up the aerodromes was too much. It was however, made clear that the RAFVR and the UASs would not be affected by this decision. The intention was to abolish the RAuxAF as such and attach its members to the regular force until the supply of National Service pilots dried up, and the last resistance collapsed with the dissolution of squadron entity. Certainly the squadrons could not survive such a transplanting, for their roots were in their histories, not in the hangers and crew rooms of any aerodrome. To abolish pride of unit was to abolish voluntary service.<sup>361</sup> The decision was made and on 10<sup>th</sup> March 1957, the twenty Royal Auxiliary Air Force Squadrons were disbanded for the last time. <sup>362</sup>

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<sup>360</sup>

TNA, Air Ministry Notice No.23, 15<sup>th</sup> January 1957.

<sup>361</sup>

Moulson, *The Millionaires Squadron*, p205.

<sup>362</sup>

Leslie Hunt, *Twenty-One Squadrons – The History of the Royal Auxiliary Air Force 1929-1957*, (London,1972), p429.



The editor of *The Aeroplane* noted

it is hard to imagine the poverty of imagination that lies behind the decision to disband the Auxiliaries. In these days when financial reward and material gain are alleged to be the only springs of conduct and employment is there no body in high places who realises that the spirit behind the Auxiliary Air Force is priceless? Nothing could be madder than to discourage those who wish to allocate their spare time to serving their country.<sup>363</sup>

With the hindsight of half a century it is possible to see that in the long run the government was right, and that Britain's long devotion to amateur service had run its course and would have to yield to the reality of technology. Flying ability was no less important, but flair and courageous individualism would yield to technical mastery and relentless learning and practice.<sup>364</sup>

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<sup>363</sup>

Ian Piper, *We never slept. The story of 605 Squadron*, (Trowbridge, 1996), p229.

<sup>364</sup>

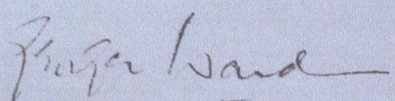
Moulson, *The Millionaires Squadron*, pp209-10.

MESSAGE FROM THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR AIR  
TO MEMBERS OF ROYAL AUXILIARY AIR FORCE UNITS TO BE  
DISBANDED

You will by now have heard the sad news that it has been decided to disband your unit of the Royal Auxiliary Air Force. I speak for all my colleagues on the Air Council when I tell you that this has been a very hard decision to take, and one which we have only reached with the greatest reluctance.

I am confident, however, that you will understand the reasons for this decision since it rests on the national interest. Rapid technical developments have enabled us to reorganize the Control and Reporting System on a more compact and economical basis. We need less units than formerly and less men to man them. This means that there is no longer any requirement which would justify the retention of your unit.

I speak not only for myself and for the Air Council but for the nation in thanking you all for your loyal and valuable service and the fine spirit in which you have given it. By far the hardest part of my task in this message is to tell you that owing to factors beyond our control we can no longer make good use of your skill and enthusiasm. I can only hope that you will accept this unpleasant fact in the same loyal spirit that you have shown in the past.

  
Secretary of State for Air

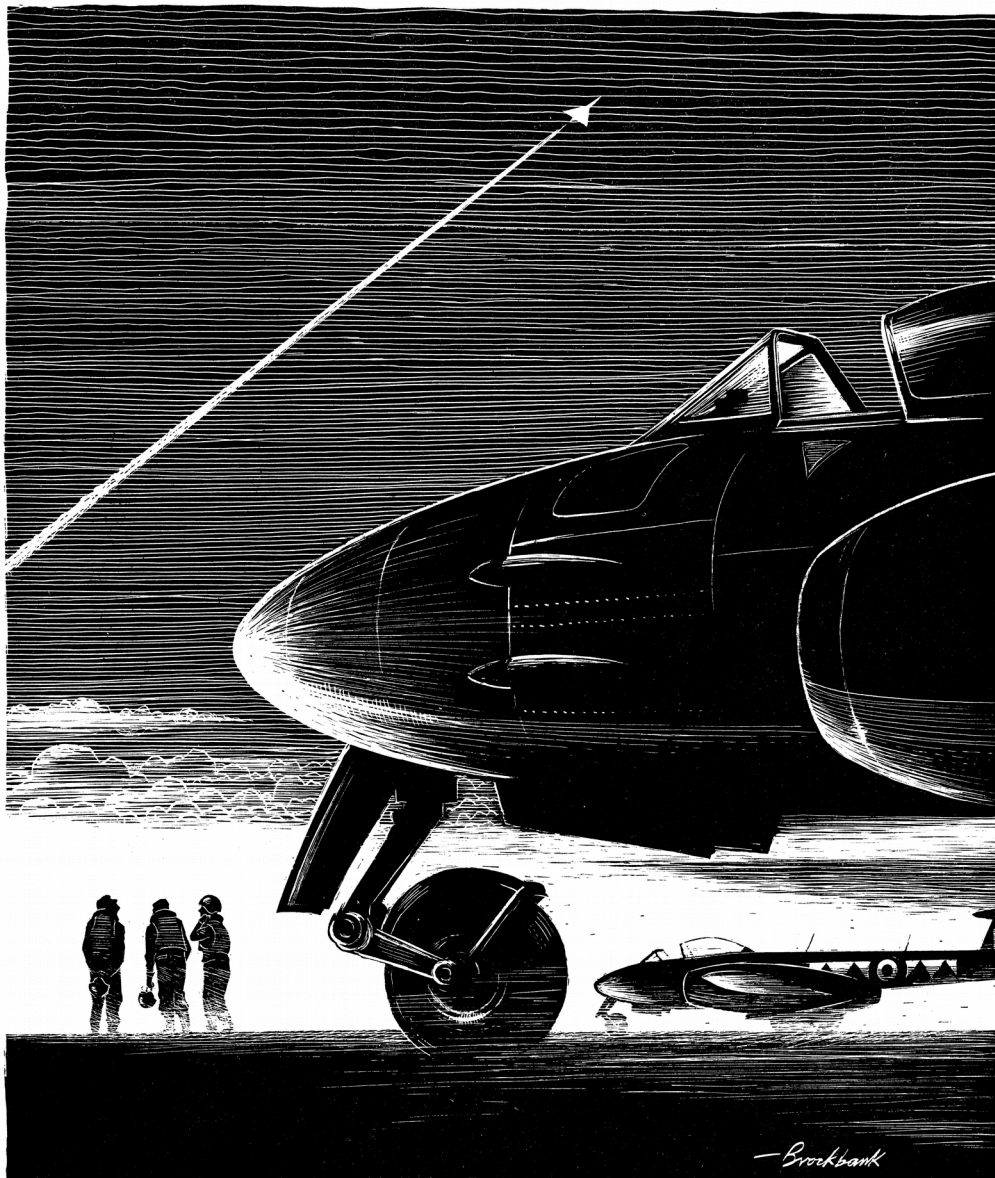
11th November, 1957

365

17 – Letter to RAuxAF squadron members from Secretary of State for Air (11th November 1957)

365

TNA, AIR 19/743, Secretary of State for Air, Letter to RAuxAF Units regarding disbandment, 11<sup>th</sup> November 1957.



*R. Aux. A. F.*

*WHEN we could serve by flying, we gave up our time and flew;  
 But now, it appears, our country has nothing for us to do.  
 No doubt the boffins have got it taped; but we'd like to make it clear—  
 If they ever find anything else for us, they will always find us here.*

<sup>366</sup> 18 – Punch cartoon (30<sup>th</sup> January 1957)

By 1953, despite a major recruiting campaign throughout the country, there was still a shortfall of aircrew, from the 7600 needed there was an establishment of only 6000. Moreover, Tiger Moths had been replaced by Chipmunks, which meant that the more up to date training aircraft were being used, but, at the time, the RAuxAF and RAF squadrons were training on Vampire jets, consequently the training of pilots in the RAFVR was lagging behind compared to the rest of the RAF. Flying schools, whose role it was to train RAFVR pilots and aircrew, trained personnel at weekends and during the two week annual camp. Group Captain Peter Harris pointed out that:

From a military standpoint, the RAFVR did represent a pool from which individuals could be called up if the need arose, but the post-war auxiliary fighter squadrons were of more immediate use, being equipped with jets and trained to provide a highly skilled reserve for Fighter Command.<sup>367</sup>

In 1997, the RAFVR was merged into the RAuxAF due to the fact that one of their functions was to provide a steady source of aircrew and ground crew for the RAF which are not so important in 2014. RAFVR Officer Cadets and Acting Pilot Officers who are members of the UASs still continue with their training following an extended training syllabus which places a much greater emphasis on the development of military skills, building existing leadership abilities and expanding the officer potential within the current membership.

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<sup>367</sup>

Group Captain Peter Harris, 'Forty Years of Volunteer Service,' Royal Air Force Reserve and Auxiliary Forces, (Oxford, 2003) p164.

The RAF Reserves continued to be divided into two distinct reserves, the RAuxAF and the RAFVR, this remains the same even considering the way in which recruitment to the AAF was so poor pre-war. This will be covered in more detail in the following chapter.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter has discussed the re-forming of the RAuxAF and the RAFVR at the end of the Second World War, and has looked at the debate which surrounded the process of their reconstitution. It has highlighted the intention of forming the two different reserves and the reasoning behind this decision. There has also been an analysis of the role of national service in the post-war world as this had a major impact on recruiting to both the RAuxAF and the RAFVR. Different recruiting posters have also been included which show the lengths that were gone to in the search for new recruits. Overall there is no doubt that it has been much more difficult to attract people to the TAF following the war than it was before the war and this perhaps tells us that the people of the United Kingdom were tired of fighting and being involved in the defence process. The chapter also examines the reasons given for the disbandment of the RAuxAF in 1957 and questions whether or not it was the case, that the belief that a part-time pilot could not hope to achieve enough flying hours to cope with the new technology in aircraft development, was true. The data presented in the following chapter will allow further analysis of whether qualifications and technical knowledge did in fact become more important than social background and class.

## **Chapter 5**

## **The social composition of the Territorial Air Force after 1945**

### **Introduction**

This chapter analyses the data that the research has gathered for the period 1946-1957. The same process of collecting the data has been used as for chapter 3, and the same nine categories used to present the information in both tables and bar charts. Has the Royal Auxiliary Air Force (RAuxAF) changed and adapted to meet the changes which are taking place in society following the end of the war? This is analysed by presenting the data for the RAuxAF across the whole of the United Kingdom, and then comparing that to the data for the two London squadrons and also for the case study squadron. The chapter also examines whether in fact the changes within the Territorial Air Force (TAF) actually reflected what was taking place in the wider society. By analysing the collected data, the thesis will be able to judge whether or not recruits to the TAF became more technically qualified as opposed to the kinds of recruits who joined the organisation before the war.

The post-war world in which the TAF was re-formed was very different from Britain in the 1930s. By the late 1950s Britain was more affluent, living standards had risen and class relations changed. Obelkevich and Catterall argue that in the post-war world “there had been a great deal of upward social mobility... Class was a reality, but it was not set in stone. British society did not consist of fixed, monolithic classes, but of porous heterogeneous groupings in which the majority of people had personal

or familial links across class lines.”<sup>368</sup> This view is supported by Richard Vinen who also noted that “class was not static”.<sup>369</sup>

In many ways a person’s class was still largely defined by their type of employment, but there were more opportunities for individuals to move across and within social classes rather than being tied to one specific grouping as was more often not the case in the interwar years. Another major factor influencing social change was the industrial structure of Britain. After 1945 the “decline in primary and secondary sectors of employment and a growth of the tertiary sector”<sup>370</sup> which had begun in the inter-war period now gathered pace. Technological advances, particularly in the secondary sector, which processed or manufactured goods, meant that machines were increasingly replacing employees. Those who worked in the secondary sector were now more likely to work in an office than they were to take manual labour. Furthermore, many industries such as agriculture, coal-mining, shipbuilding, railway engineering and textiles had been in decline since the end of the Second World War, whereas a massive growth was seen in the highly technological industries such as chemicals and electronics. The range of skills required by industry had therefore changed. Furthermore, the growth in non-manual jobs created new complexities in terms of class with the old manual and non-manual divide increasingly irrelevant.

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<sup>368</sup>

James Obelkevich and Peter Catterall (eds), *Understanding Post-War British Society*, (London, 1994) p5.

<sup>369</sup>

Richard Vinen, *National Service. A Generation in Uniform 1945-1963*, (London, 2015) p80.

<sup>370</sup>

Christopher Law, ‘Employment and Industrial Structure,’ in James Obelkevich and Peter Catterall (eds), *Understanding Post-War British Society*, (London, 1994) p91.

These changes were not uniform across the country. Many of the new service industries had grown around London and the south of England, whilst the decline in staple industries such as coal-mining, shipbuilding and textiles, affected employment opportunities in the north of the country dramatically. Thus in 1951, 38% of all employment was concentrated in the south of England as compared to 26% in the north and 15% in the Midlands, primarily within the manufacturing industry.<sup>371</sup> Many inner-city industries such as docks and railways were in decline whilst there was a major growth in the industrialisation of rural areas by new business parks. Furthermore, as Edward Royle argues, the growth of consumerism, the expansion of the holiday market and technological advances in transport, especially the opening of Heathrow Airport in 1946 allowing for overseas travel, all helped shape a radically new society.<sup>372</sup>

The wave of patriotism that swept the country during and immediately after the war forms part of an ongoing debate amongst historians as to the role played by the Second World War in creating a sense of national identity and social solidarity. Angus Calder<sup>373</sup> reinforces the traditional view of the role of the war in developing characteristics such as the ability to adapt to difficult situations, a willingness to volunteer, to depend on each other and a sense of British nationalism. This he argued, brought out the best in British civilians and created a sense of social

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<sup>371</sup>

Edward Royle, *Modern Britain A Social History 1750-1997*, (London, 1987) p12.  
<sup>372</sup>

<sup>373</sup> Ibid, p12.

Angus Calder, *The Myth of the Blitz*, (London, 1992) p3.



solidarity that broke down class barriers. However, this view began to be challenged in the early 1990s by historians such as Robert Mackay<sup>374</sup> who looked at the role of morale against the civilian population by studying a range of primary sources including mass observation studies and concluded that “overall, the traditional picture of a spirited and resilient people is a valid one.”<sup>375</sup> Furthermore, propaganda was used successfully to stimulate patriotism through the promise of post-war reconstruction, and this sense of national pride played its own part in increasing potential recruits to both the RAuxAF and the Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve (RAFVR).

Beaven suggests that “in a period of increased domestic and international tensions, employers justified their involvement in their immediate local community on a number of levels,”<sup>376</sup> and it seems that the war strengthened the sense of community not just at national but also at local level. Consequently, it comes as no surprise that local employers supported their employees joining voluntary organisations such as the RAuxAF and the RAFVR.

It is important to be aware that there are some anomalies with the post-war data which are not present in the pre-war data. These are in the first instance 173 men

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<sup>374</sup>

Robert Mackay, *Half the Battle. Civilian Morale in Britain during the Second World War*, (Manchester, 2002) p19.

<sup>375</sup>

Mackay, *Half the Battle*, p19.

<sup>376</sup>

Brad Beaven, *Leisure, Citizenship and Working-Class Men in Britain 1850-1945*, (Manchester, 2005) p9.

who have been identified through the *London Gazette* as having volunteered to join the RAuxAF between 1946 and 1957. These men are all lumped together because the squadron numbers for these men have not been given in the *London Gazette*, only the date of their commissions. The reason for this is not clear, but this has affected the RAuxAF post-war data when compared to the pre-war data. Secondly the impact of National Service on the figures must also not be discounted. All young men over the age of eighteen were identified as having to serve two years National Service. At the completion of this they had to remain in the reserve for four years. Richard Vinen suggests that the number of men conscripted for National Service between 1948 and 1960 was 2,167,884 of which 430,885 were taken by the RAF, giving an overall ratio in the RAF of two thirds regular servicemen to one third National Service men.<sup>377</sup> Those men joining the RAFVR after 1948 came in holding different ranks and this may well be due to accrued time which they had built up during their National Service.

### **The Auxiliary Air Force**

Following the cessation of hostilities, the decision was taken to reform the AAF on 2<sup>nd</sup> June 1946 following consultation between the Air Ministry and the local County Associations. The idea that the reformed Auxiliary Air Force (AAF) would still be a part of the country's front-line defence system, provided that its numbers did not unbalance the overall structure of the Royal Air Force (RAF). The new AAF squadrons were also intended to operate from their Home Stations.<sup>378</sup>

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<sup>377</sup>

Vinen, *National Service. A Generation in Uniform*, p9.

<sup>378</sup>

Significantly, there were still recruiting concerns as the initial belief was that RAF personnel who had been demobbed at the end of the war would be keen to join the AAF to maintain their contact with the services as discussed in the previous chapter. The framework remained the same in the reformed RAuxAF as it was in the pre-war AAF. It represented a pan-class organisation that was nonetheless hierarchical in nature. Most significantly, social status and background no longer presented quite the same barrier to joining, and thus, the post-war auxiliaries drew lots of different people together through a shared interest in aircraft, as opposed to shared social, educational and recreational interests based largely on class codes.

All of the auxiliary squadrons were reformed on 10<sup>th</sup> May 1946, and an official announcement in the Royal Air Force Review during 1946/1947 noted that “reformed after seven years magnificent service with the RAF, the Auxiliary squadrons are now looking for the right type of men from those who are being released from war service to carry on their fine traditions.”<sup>379</sup> It explained exactly what was meant by ‘right type’ by explaining that:

only trained men who gained their skill and experience in the Service  
are being taken on to man the Force. There are to be no ‘passengers’;  
every member of the squadron comes in fully trained and able to tackle  
his particular job from the start, service in the Auxiliaries will keep him

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Squadron Leader A F Freeman, ‘The Post-War Royal Auxiliary Air Force,’  
Royal Air Force Reserve and Auxiliary Forces, (Oxford, 2003) pp96-109.  
<sup>379</sup>

David Ross et al, *The greatest Squadron of Them All. The Definitive History of 603 (City of Edinburgh) Squadron RAuxAF. Volume II. 1941 to date*, (London, 2003) p292.

up to scratch and abreast of all the latest technical developments and new methods of training as they come into effect.<sup>380</sup>

Individually, some of the reformed squadrons did better than others when recruitment figures are considered. The table below highlights the poor overall numbers of identified men who served as officers in the pre-war AAF and then re-joined the newly reformed post-war RAuxAF:

**Table 20 - Pre-War AAF officers who re-joined the reformed post-war RAuxAF**

<b><u>Squadron Number</u></b>	<b><u>Name</u></b>	<b><u>Pre-War</u></b>	<b><u>Post-War</u></b>
600	Thomas Norman Hayes Ralph Hiscox Peter Graham Stewart	05/07/193 6 03/08/192 9 01/03/192 7	17/09/1946 30/01/1952 11/04/1950
601	Max Aitken Peter William Dunning-White	11/09/193 5 27/11/193 8	17/09/1946 17/09/1946
602	Robert Findlay Boyd Marcus Robinson	02/11/193 5 08/05/193 4	14/07/1947 17/09/1946
603	George Kemp Gilroy James Lawrence Jack James Storrs Morton	10/04/193 8 25/01/192 7 14/07/193 9	17/09/1946 15/01/1952 17/09/1946
604	John Cunningham	07/05/193	17/09/1946

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<sup>380</sup>

Ibid, p292.

	Lewis Edward Alton Healy Keith Temple Lofts	6 06/06/193 8 07/11/193 8	05/06/1950 27/05/1946
605	Patrick George Leeson	05/12/193 6	09/04/1946
607	James Michael Bazin William Francis Blackadder George Dudley Craig Joseph Robert Kayll Robert Edwin Welford Pumphrey George Richard Ardene Wilson	02/12/193 5 01/06/193 6 28/05/193 7 01/06/193 4 13/03/193 7 23/05/193 6	05/12/1946 05/12/1946 27/07/1946 17/09/1946 26/10/1953 02/08/1949
608	William Appelby-Brown	07/02/193 8	01/08/1946
609	-	-	-
610	Cyril Stanley Bamberger James Anthony Leathart	17/06/193 6 15/06/193 6	02/08/1949 03/03/1947
611	William Johnson Leather Francis David Stephen Scott- Malden	14/05/193 6 03/10/194 0	17/09/1946 17/09/1946
612	Ramsey Roger Russell	15/06/193 7	17/12/1946
613	-	-	-
614	-	-	-
615	-	-	-
616	Lionel Harwood Casson Maurice Clarke Denis Gillam Kenneth Holden James McCairns	02/05/193 8 07/04/193 8 18/05/193 8 15/04/193 9 12/02/193 9	27/02/1951 04/05/1949 09/09/1946 18/03/1947 09/09/1946
500	Charles Patrick Green	30/11/193	17/09/1946

		5	
501	-	-	-
502	William Hunter McGiffin	01/07/1937	17/09/1946
504	John Crescens Reynolds Michael Rook	15/04/1935 08/08/1938	02/08/1949 11/12/1947

As can be seen, 607 Squadron managed to recruit six pre-war officers and this would seem to be the most that any of the individual squadrons recruited suggesting that the initial requirement to recruit those men who had served before or during the war was an overly optimistic one. Those who had served with the pre-war AAF and were really keen to re-join did so in 1946. From the research this would appear to be eighteen out of a total of thirty one men, which amounts to 58% of those named officers re-joining. Across the country the initial response was so poor that in December 1946 the Air Ministry announced that recruiting for the AAF would be open to civilian candidates with no previous military experience.

600 and 601 Squadron were overwhelmed with applications to join the newly formed London squadrons. 600 Squadron was re-established at Biggin Hill. Its new Commanding Officer (CO) was Wing Commander Norman Hayes who, along with many officers who volunteered to join the AAF after the war, accepted a lower rank to take up the post.<sup>381</sup> Three pre-war members of the squadron re-joined, and other new recruits included Jack Meadows, who became a CO of the squadron and David Proudlove who was a member of the Guild of Air Pilots and Air Navigators. The research has identified 31 men who volunteered to join the reformed squadron, and of those identified men, biographies were found for 11 of them, which, in percentage

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<sup>381</sup>

Hans Onderwater, *Gentlemen in Blue. 600 Squadron*, (Barnsley, 1997) p327.

terms, is 35%. When analysing the post-war figures there are some significant changes when compared to the pre-war squadron. Notable changes can be seen with regard to the public school/Oxbridge education that 32% of the pre-war members had. None of the post-war 600 Squadron had a public school background and only 9% of them had attended Oxford or Cambridge University. There is an increase in the number of men who had their child's birth announced in *The Times* with the post-war figure standing at 27% when compared to the pre-war figure of 11%, whilst the marriage and death announcement figures remain similar. The other significant increase is the number of post-war men who worked within the professions or in business. This figure has risen to 55% compared to the figure of 47% for the pre-war officers.

601 Squadron re-formed at Hendon with Max Aitkin, second Baron Beaverbrook, reverting to his 1940 rank to lead the squadron. Three ex-group captains and two ex-wing commanders also dropped rank in order to re-join. For example, Hugh Dundas, who had originally been commissioned into 616 Squadron in 1939 who held the rank of group captain joined 601 as a flying officer and also accepted a job as air correspondent on Aitkin's *Daily Express*. Paul Richey who had originally been commissioned into 609 Squadron was also a keen recruit, as was Chris McCarthy-Jones who had been commissioned into 504 Squadron before the war. Finally, Peter Dunning-White, who had been a wing commander accepted the rank of flying officer in order to re-join. Many ex-officers returned to fly as Non-Commissioned Officers (NCO) pilots, and consequently there was an ex-squadron leader and three ex-flight lieutenants in non-commissioned pilot roles. The demand for places was so great that a board was set up, chaired by Squadron Leader Aitkin, to reduce the 400

applicants to pilots with 1,500 flying hours or more.<sup>382</sup> Sir Peter Beckford Rutgers Vanneck, son of Lord Huntingford was also a post-war 601 member, with a public school background; he was a former student of Cambridge University, had been in the Fleet Air Arm and insisted on wearing naval wings on his highly individual uniform. He flew a Vampire to Horsham St Faith in Norfolk for a shoot, emerging from his small cockpit replete with tweeds, gun and spaniel.<sup>383</sup> Both Desmond Norman, co-founder of the crop spraying firm of Britten-Norman Ltd and his brother Torquil, a Cambridge educated investment banker, were members of the squadron. Subsequent commanding officers included Paul Richey who was a journalist and author and Chris MacCarthy-Jones who was a sales manager. 601 also had no problem recruiting ground crews, although this process took longer. The squadron bought £100 worth of advertising space in London's tube trains and soon had enough applications to make up establishment. Among the airmen were bus drivers, policemen, a baker, a barrow boy and a lighthouse keeper.<sup>384</sup>

The 601 tradition of exclusiveness continued after the war with summer camp squadron dinners requiring the best silver and mess ornaments being transported from Kensington.<sup>385</sup> One particular episode of high jinks occurred at the Manston summer camp in 1948. During the meal in the mess, an explosion of powerful

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<sup>382</sup>

Tom Moulson, *The Millionaires Squadron. The Remarkable Story of 601 Squadron and the Flying Sword*, (Barnsley, 2014) p192.

<sup>383</sup>

Ibid, p171.

<sup>384</sup>

Ibid, p168.

<sup>385</sup>

Ibid, p170.



fireworks under the table caused pandemonium when the room filled with smoke as rockets impaled themselves in the ceiling and showered the diners with sparks. A notice "Quick Quick I'm on fire!!!" was pinned to the Mayor of Margate's back and he was drenched in soda water from powerful siphons. Seventy pounds worth of damage was caused during this incident, which the squadron members paid willingly. The squadron was also famous for car races through London in the middle of the night and for continuous horseplay both in and out of the mess.<sup>386</sup> Other notable post-war recruits were Prince Emanuel Gallitzine, whose father had been aide de camp for the Russian Grand Duke Nikoli Nikolaevich, head of all of the Russian armies, who moved to England in the hope of a better future for his son. Also Arden Merville-Crawley who played cricket for Kent, and was the MP for North Buckinghamshire. 40 men were identified as joining 601 squadron after 1946, and of those men, biographies have been found for 16 of them, which is 40%. When comparing the data for the post-war officers the number of men who attended public school remains the same, but the number of men who went on to an Oxbridge university has fallen considerably from 51% before the war to 19% after the war. Also the number of men whose death announcement appeared in *The Times* has fallen from 60% pre-war to only 13% post-war. Finally, again the number of men working in the professions or in business has risen considerably to 81% in the post-war world as compared to 60% before the war.

Combining the data for 600 and 601 Squadron, there were 71 officers identified of which there were 27 biographies. This means that the percentage of officers with

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<sup>386</sup>

biographies is 38%. The table below shows the comparison between pre-war and post-war data.

**Table 21 - 600 and 601 Squadron comparison of Pre and Post-War initial data**

<b><u>Squadron Number</u></b>	<b><u>Pre-War Identified Men</u></b>	<b><u>Post-War Identified Men</u></b>	<b><u>Pre-War Men With Biographies</u></b>	<b><u>Post War Men with Biographies</u></b>
<b>600</b>	70	31	27	11
<b>601</b>	72	40	45	16

The obvious difference between the pre and post-war figures is the significantly less number of men who have been identified as serving in either 600 or 601 Squadron after the war, which in the case of 600 Squadron is well under half, and in the case of 601 Squadron is just over half. This is similar for the number of biographies that were found, with both squadrons being under half of the pre-war numbers. When the biographies are broken down by category, the results are shown below:

**Table 22 - 600 and 601 Squadron comparison between pre and post-war data by category**

<b><u>Category</u></b>	<b><u>Pre-War 600 Squadron</u></b>	<b><u>Pre-War 601 Squadron</u></b>	<b><u>Post-War 600 Squadron</u></b>	<b><u>Post-War 601 Squadron</u></b>
Public School	7	17	0	8
Oxford or Cambridge	6	17	1	5
Other University	0	1	0	0
Elite Sport	2	12	0	4
Marriage Announcement	3	10	2	4
Birth Announcement	2	2	3	0

Profession/Business	7	24	6	14
Family Business	1	4	1	1
University Air Squadron	1	1	1	1

In terms of the profession/business category, 11 or 55% of the men worked in business, 3 or 15% were in the newspaper industry, 2 or 10% were in politics and 5 or 25% were in the professions such as law or medicine. Elite sports which have been included in the post-war include golf, fencing, yachting and rowing, boxing, cricket and rugby, hunting and horse riding. The two men who were involved in politics were both Members of Parliament. Similar results are shown for the public school category where no members of 600 Squadron were found to attend and in fact all but one of the categories for 600 Squadron show a decrease in numbers. When looking at the numbers for 601 Squadron, again it is apparent that there is a significant fall in numbers for all of the categories. This would appear to suggest that the two squadrons on whom the bulk of the evidence regarding the AAF is based, present an image of a “gentleman’s flying club” in the years up to the Second World War, but become much more inclusive in the years after. The discussion will now move on to consider the rest of the squadrons of the AAF to see whether or not they follow a similar pattern to the two key London squadrons.

602 Squadron was reformed on 10<sup>th</sup> May at RNAS Abbotsinch, under the command of Squadron Leader Marcus Robinson. Marcus Robinson was a pre-war member of the squadron who was de-mobbed in February 1946 and appointed to command 602 Squadron immediately after it was re-formed. Robert Findlay Boyd was the only other officer who had served in the pre-war squadron. Other members of the squadron included Pierre Clostermann who later became a member of the French

House of Representatives, Andrew McDowall who worked as a test pilot for Rolls Royce and Stephen Mackay who had a successful career as managing director of several of the national newspapers, for example, the *Evening Standard*, the *Sunday Times* and the *Daily and Sunday Telegraph*. 11 men were identified as joining the squadron with biographies found for 8 of the men. This equates to 73%. The data for 602 Squadron shows considerable differences from the pre-war data. For example, no identified officers were educated at public school or at Oxbridge universities. This compares to the pre-war data of 17% and 9% respectively. As with 600 and 601 Squadrons, the number of men whose death announcements appear in *The Times* has increased from 13% to 22%, but again, the biggest change is those men who worked in professions or business which has risen from 4% to 50%.

603 Squadron reformed on 10<sup>th</sup> May 1946 at RAF Turnhouse<sup>3</sup>, commanded by Squadron Leader George Gilroy DSO DFC. He had ended the war with the rank of Group Captain but was more than happy to re-join the squadron at a significantly lower rank. Here, finding suitable candidates to become officers and members of the squadron meant facing a selection board, followed by “a boozy selection board at L’Aperitif in Rose Street with John Sowerby, 603s Adjutant, Count Stevens and another 603 old boy, both ex Group Captains.”<sup>387</sup> However, recruiting for the squadron was very poor and at the beginning of 1947, the squadron only had 3 officers and 35 airmen. A one week recruiting drive was launched with the support of the main Scottish newspapers – *The Edinburgh Evening News*, *The Scotsman* and *The Flying Despatch*, which resulted in 50 applications for flying posts and 50

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<sup>387</sup>

applications for ground positions. But by January 1949 establishment strength was still low with 14 officers, four airman pilots and 50 other ranks. Yet another recruiting campaign began resulting in a further 150 applications with limited results again highlighting recruiting problems across all of the auxiliary squadrons across the country. Three men, George Kemp Gilroy, James Lawrence Jack and James Storrs Morton were the only men who had served in the pre-war 603 Squadron and the post-war squadron. Overall 44 men were identified for 603 Squadron and biographies were found for 13 of them which is 30%. When comparing the data for this squadron, the number of men attending public school is similar whilst the number of men attending Oxbridge universities has doubled. Those having marriage announcements has fallen to 15% compared to the pre-war figure of 24%. Those having death announcements in *The Times* has also fallen from the pre-war figure of 58% to the post-war figure of 23%. However, as seems to be the post-war trend, the number of men in the professions or business has risen from 18% to 46%

604 Squadron re-formed at Hendon and Group Captain John Cunningham reverted back to the rank of Squadron leader. He had graduated from Cambridge University as an aeronautical engineer in 1938 and had immediately joined de Havilland as a test pilot, as well as joining the AAF. Thus, along with Lewis Edward Alton Healy, he had served in both the pre and post-war AAF. Another pre-war officer was Keith Lofts, a pre-war Wing Commander who was offered the post of Flight Commander accepting a lower rank of Flight Lieutenant. In November 1946 posters were put up in the local area to try to attract potential recruits. Many applications were received with most men wanting to fly rather than working in a support capacity. Recruiting and interviewing then took place resulting in the squadron processing over 100

officer pilot applications, 30 NCO pilots and around 30 airmen. Other notable recruits were Brian Cross, who bailed out of a Meteor jet at 20,000 feet and was rescued by an Albatross Amphibian of the US Air Force and Derek Yates who got lost in his Vampire jet over Norfolk and was able to signal SOS with his wing tips to a KB29 air tanker aircraft which guided him to an airfield where he landed safely with enough fuel left for five minutes of flying.<sup>388</sup> 8 Men were identified as joining 604 Squadron post-war and biographies were found on all of them. Data for this squadron shows that those men attending a public school fell from 54% to 0 and in similar fashion those attending an Oxbridge university fell from 31% to 0. However, those working in business or professions rose from a pre-war figure of 23% to a post-war figure of 38%.

605 Squadron reformed at Honiley with Squadron Leader R John Walker in command. Recruiting was very slow initially with a particular shortage of technicians and ground crew. In 1948, 605 Squadron became the first auxiliary squadron to be equipped with the new de Havilland Vampire, a jet aircraft. This new arrival did not sit well with the locals, and a vicar of a small village complained that the jets were affecting his parishioners. He complained to the local MP, Sir John Mellor, and asked for a total ban of Sunday flying. The response of the CO was as follows:

The auxiliary services have to be maintained and that can only be done by weekend flying. Auxiliary squadrons are composed of personnel who

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388

are working in the office and factories during the week and their only opportunity of flying training is at weekends.<sup>389</sup>

Patrick Leeson was the only officer to have served in both the pre and post-war squadron. Notable recruits included John Cecil-Wright who became Conservative MP for Edrington and R Smalley who was serving as first officer on a civilian Viking Airliner which went missing in 1961, with a school party of 34 fourteen year old boys and their two school masters on board. Information on this squadron was much harder to find and 40 men were identified as having joined the squadron as officers, with biographies being found for only 13 of them, which amounts to 33%. The data for 605 Squadron also has lots of gaps in it. Those attending a public school fell from 25% to 8%, whilst no men attended an Oxbridge university. Marking life events with announcements in *The Times* still continued with marriage announcements staying the same and death announcements falling by 1%. The number of men in business or professions rose from 38% to 54%

607 Squadron was re-formed at Ouston and was commanded by Squadron Leader Joseph R Kayll, a member of the pre-war squadron as well as James Bazin, William Blackadder, George Craig, Bob Pumphrey and George Wilson, all of whom reverted back to pre-war ranks. Only 7 men were identified as having joined the squadron with biographies being found for 5 of the men, amounting to 71%. Those attending public school increased in the post-war era from 30% to 40%, whilst the figure for Oxbridge universities remained similar. 40% of men had their marriage announced in

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<sup>389</sup>

Ian Piper, *We never slept. The Story of 605 Squadron*, (Tamworth, 1996) p210.

*The Times*, whilst there was another increase in death announcements from 10-20%. Finally, those in professions and business increased from 15% to 40% at the expense of those working in family businesses who fell from 55% to 20%.

609 Squadron re-formed at Yeadon under the command of Squadron Leader Patrick H Womersley. He faced a different set of problems to those faced by Harold Peake in 1936. "With the war won, people were sick of hardship, discipline and uniforms, and the problem now was how to utilise some of the wartime skills and experience in a squadron whose future was both vague and unassured."<sup>390</sup> However, Ziegler also suggests that the attraction of belonging to such an exclusive club as the AAF was still powerful and within a year, 609 had virtually reached establishment numbers. Arthur Hudson, who was CO for four of the six that he served with the squadron said:

Some, a declining number, were influenced still by patriotism – men who could not bear to think of the war having been fought in vain, and who felt it was just as important to win the peace. Others had a liking for the service but not for service life, or missed service camaraderie but wanted a home life too. Amongst the aircrew were many who had flying in their blood and could not bear to give it up, but did not want to make it a whole-time job; while amongst the ground crew were many of the trades who had acquired new skills and wished to preserve and practice them.<sup>391</sup>

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F H Ziegler, *The Story of 609 Squadron. Under the White Rose*, (London, 1971) p318.

<sup>391</sup>

Ibid, p320.



The second CO was Roland P Beaumont who had worked in civilian life as a test pilot with the English Electric Company at Warton in Lancashire. Another post-war officer was Peter Hodgson, an ex-Oxford University student who had represented Yorkshire at rugby and “owned a pre-war vintage SS Jaguar that he used to race other officers’ home after a day’s flying.”<sup>392</sup>

By 1948 heavy recruiting had been followed by poor attendance and marked inefficiency as some members became disillusioned with the future of the AAF. When Arthur Hudson took over as CO in 1949 he was in charge of a unit that was only one quarter of its previous size. In order to rebuild the squadron, the selection board became more selective as the calibre of the applicants rose. Later members who joined the squadron after 1948 included many men who had completed their two year National Service, including James Heath, Malcolm Slingsby and Francis Reacroft. 15 men were identified through the London Gazette as having been commissioned into the squadron and biographies were found on 11 of them, amounting to 73%. The data shows that those attending public school/Oxbridge fell from 27% to zero in the post-war period. In terms of family announcements in *The Times*, marriage announcements fell from 20% to 9%, birth announcements increased from zero to 18% whilst death announcements fell from 13% to zero. Also, the number of men working in a professional capacity or within a business environment fell from 46% to 27%, whilst those working in family businesses also fell from 27% to zero.

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<sup>392</sup>

610 re-formed at Hooton Park under Squadron Leader Peter Gilbert Lamb and 5 men were identified as serving within the squadron. Two pre-war officers signed up to the post-war AAF, Cyril Bamberger and James Leathart. Biographies were found for 4 of the identified men amounting to 80%. Summer camps were held at Tangmere, Thorney Island, Horsham st Faith and Sylt in Germany, and just before the Squadron disbanded in 1957 it was noted that

of the 610 RAuxAF pilots, fourteen held degrees, and – to a man – offered to carry on their flying without pay or allowances, a gesture of which the pre-war Auxiliaries would have been very proud had they been there to share the genuine dismay at the decision to cease this part-time flying.<sup>393</sup>

For 610 Squadron, the data was very poor. It shows that the number of men who had attended public school had increased from 18% to 25%, whilst no men had gone on to an Oxbridge university. No men used *The Times* for family announcements, which was a significant fall from the 55% of the pre-war men whose deaths had been announced. There was however an increase in the number of men working in either the professions or in business from 18% prior to the war to 75% in the post-war world.

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393

Leslie Hunt, *Twenty-One Squadrons. The History of the Royal Auxiliary Air Force 1925-1957*, (London, 1972) p242.

611 Squadron re-formed at RAF Woodvale in Lancashire under Group Captain William Johnson Leather, who had also dropped rank to Squadron Leader to re-join. Francis Scott-Malden was another pre-war member of the squadron who re-joined in 1946. By the end of 1946 squadron strength was 25 airmen and 3 officers. Adverts were on local cinema screens and in both Liverpool and Southport newspapers, together with talks in local clubs. By March 1947 seven new pilots had been recruited, four of whom held the rank of sergeant, with three flying officers. As more planes flew over the area, so applications for the squadron increased; thus by the end of 1947, squadron strength was equal to 54% of establishment. By 1954 the squadron had 19 AAF pilots but was still running below strength.<sup>394</sup> Other notable officers were Alec Finlay who worked as a director of British Airways and Colin Hodgkinson who suffered a mid-air collision whilst in the Fleet Air Arm, which resulted in severe burns and the loss of both legs. Strongly influenced by Douglas Bader's story, he joined the RAF as a pilot, but was shot down over enemy territory and spent the rest of the war as a prisoner. 48 men were identified as having been gazetted into the squadron and 19 of them also had biographies which is 40%. The data remains steady for those attending public school, but those family or personal announcements which are found in *The Times* show a decrease in both marriage and death announcements and a slight increase in the number of births. Those working in a profession or in business has risen from the pre-war figure of 18% to the post-war figure of 42%.

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394

Aldon P Ferguson, *Beware Beware, The History of 611 (West Lancashire) Squadron Royal Auxiliary Air Force*, (Reading, 2004) p148.

612 Squadron reformed on 10<sup>th</sup> May at RAF Dyce under the command of Squadron Leader Ramsey Roger Russell, who had also served in the squadron prior to the war. It proved very difficult to identify through the *London Gazette* or the Times Digital Archive any men serving in the squadron. Only one man was identified with a biography and that was the previously named CO. Hunt however notes that the officers in the squadron included a “master plumber, an agricultural student and an ex-Bomber Command DFC who was now happy to fly as an NCO.”<sup>395</sup> Unfortunately, without first and last names, the task to identify officers is practically impossible. This is reflected in the fact that there is no data to compare with the pre-war numbers.

613 Squadron was re-formed at Ringway under the command of James Storrs Morton.<sup>396</sup> Members of the squadron included Frederick Butterworth, who served as a town councillor in Bournemouth in 1965, he bought the Branksome Tower Hotel for £200,000 and then sold it three weeks later for an undisclosed price, stating that his plans had changed and he no longer needed to own the hotel. 7 men were identified and of those men, 5 biographies were found, equating to 71%. The data for 613 Squadron is again rather sketchy, however it tells us that the number of men attending public school was now 0, whilst those attending an Oxbridge university had increased to 20%. Those using *The Times* to make marriage announcements had increased to 20%, whilst no one was found to announce births or deaths in *The Times*. However, again the number of men working in the professions or in business had increased from 33% to 60%

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<sup>395</sup>

<sup>396</sup> Hunt, *Twenty-One Squadrons*, p339.

*The Times*, August 2<sup>nd</sup> 1946, p6.

614 Squadron re-formed at Llandow on 26<sup>th</sup> August 1947, commanded by Squadron Leader W H Irving. This squadron was also particularly difficult to research and searches in *The London Gazette* and The Times Digital Archives proved fruitless. Apart from the CO, the only other name that was found was Nigel Palmer who was killed when his Vampire jet collided with another 614 Squadron Vampire over the Isle of Wight in 1954. Overall, the research found two names for the squadron and a biography on one of them which amounts to 50%. There is no data for 614 Squadron, which therefore shows a decrease in the number of men attending public school from 25% to zero, and also going on to an Oxbridge university from 17% to zero in the post-war world. Similarly *The Times* has not been used to make any family announcements which again shows a fall from 33% marriage, 25% birth and 50% death to zero. This is again reflected in the fall of business/professions from 17% to zero.

615 Squadron re-formed at Biggin Hill and was commanded by Squadron Leader Ronald Gustave Kellett<sup>397</sup> who had joined the pre-war 600 squadron in 1934. Interesting names included Neville Duke who was Chief Test Pilot for Hawker Aircraft Limited. He broke the world air speed record in 1954, and of course Ronald Kellett who worked as a stockbroker and enjoyed country pursuits such as hunting and shooting. 8 men were identified, all of whom had biographies. The data for this squadron is better than the previous squadron, showing an increase in the number of men attending public school and an Oxbridge university from zero to 13%. Those

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<sup>397</sup>

*The Times*, August 2<sup>nd</sup> 1946, p6.

using *The Times* for family or personal announcements had changed after the war with a decrease from 60% of men having death announcements in the pre-war world and no one using them in the post-war world. However, again there was an increase in the number of men working in business or the professions from 10% to 63%.

616 Squadron was formed at RAF Finningley and immediately began a recruiting campaign to attract new members:

An immediate emotional response was provoked and ex-airmen from offices and shops, the railways, the banks, the schools, the steelworks, rushed to volunteer. Company directors, commercial travellers, men from all walks, were suddenly re-united in a common desire to see No 616 Squadron a strong and useful part of our country's defence.<sup>398</sup>

Several of the pre-war veterans joined along with wartime members and Squadron Leader Ken Holden was appointed CO. Other former pilots included Group Captain Denis Gillam, Buck Casson, Jim McCairns and Maurice Clarke, and they were so keen to join that they accepted far lower ranks than they had held during the war. This also applied to ground personnel where ex-officers readily accepted duties as NCOs. Interviews, selection and approval had to take place but within six months the squadron had 23 pilots, 5 navigators and 21 ground crew.<sup>399</sup> By 1948, 616 Squadron was still trying to recruit its full quota of auxiliaries. Over time several pilots had to

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<sup>398</sup>

Hunt, *Twenty-one Squadrons*, p411.

<sup>399</sup>

Delve, Ken & Pitchfork, Graham, *South Yorkshire's Own. The Story of 616 Squadron*, (Exeter, 1992), p42.

resign as pressure of work meant that they were unable to complete the necessary levels of continuation training. One way of reducing the shortfall of pilots was to take on ex-National Service pilots as they became available. However problems of recruiting still remained, although an advertising campaign on the side of Sheffield trams produced a fresh batch of applications. By the time 616 squadron was disbanded it was still struggling to attract enough new recruits.<sup>400</sup> 10 men were identified, with 4 having biographies which equates to 40%. Those attending public schools had fallen from 50% to 25%, and the university figures remained at zero. Personal announcements in *The Times* remained stable, whilst those in business or professions fell from 75% pre-war to 50% post-war, with the number of men working in family businesses increasing from a pre-war figure of 0 to a post-war figure of 25%.

500 Squadron re-formed on 23<sup>rd</sup> August 1946 at Maidstone under the command of Squadron leader Patrick Green, who had previously served in the squadron from 1936. One story from this squadron which shows the high jinks that still went on in the mess:

we used to have good 'dining-in' nights at Astley House. The men, I remember, at one time clubbed together to buy a piano that one of them had seen. It cost the princely sum of £5.00 and many thought it would be nice to have a piano in the mess for social evenings. However, not everyone thought alike. Their intention was that the piano should not be played. With a sound like charging Indians, several of the officers

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400

Ibid, p42.

descended on this poor piano with axes, hammers and all manner of dreadful weapons. In no time at all the poor piano was demolished and was then burnt ceremoniously in the officers mess grate, causing black clouds of smoke which rose, but then sank back to earth enveloping the residents houses within 200 yards of the mess.<sup>401</sup>

Only 5 men were identified for 500 Squadron with 3 having biographies. Again the data for this squadron is poor with a slight decrease in the number of marriage announcements in *The Times* from 73% to 67%, with the death announcements falling from 27% to zero post-war. Those in professions and business increased from 0% to 33% with those working in family businesses increasing from 0 to 33% post-war.

501 Squadron re-formed on 10<sup>th</sup> May 1946 at Filton with Squadron Leader Tom James as CO. The squadron attended summer camps in Malta and trained hard to be able to fly and maintain the new jet aircraft. John Crossley will be sadly remembered for flying under the Clifton Suspension Bridge and crashing into the bank of the river Avon, just hours before the final disbandment parade. Whereas Brien Smith managed to come second in the four lap race of the RAuxAF pilots in 1949. 28 men were identified and biographies were found for 13 of them which amounted to 46%. The data shows that in terms of family announcements in *The Times*, those making marriage announcements increased from 29% to 81%, the birth

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401



announcements increased from zero to 81% whilst the death announcements remained the same. Following the trend the number of men working in professions and business rose from 71% to 92%.

502 Squadron re-formed at RAF Aldergrove, commanded by Squadron Leader William Hunter McGiffin, who had served with the squadron from 1937. Flying Officer W Bowden came first in the aforementioned RAuxAF pilot's race in 1949 with an average speed of 325mph. Only 4 men were identified as recruits with 3 having biographies, equating to 75%. From this data the only information that can be gleaned is the increase in men working in business or the professions from 23% to 33%.

Finally, 504 Squadron re-formed at RAF Syerston on the 10<sup>th</sup> May 1946, commanded by Squadron Leader A H Hook. John Crescens Reynolds and Michael Rook also re-joined having served with the squadron prior to the war. 2 men were identified as having joined the post-war squadron with biographies for them both. Again the data here is sketchy with those attending public school remaining stable, whilst in terms of those using *The Times* for family and personal announcements, those making marriage announcements rose from 24% to 50% and those announcing deaths increased very slightly from 47% to 50%.

At this point an anomaly with the total figures must be discussed. 173 men names were given by the *London Gazette* as having been commissioned into the RAuxAF between 1946 and 1957. However, no squadron numbers were given for these men.

Therefore they are dealt with collectively, and of these men, only 21 biographies were found which equated to a very poor 12%. Analysing the data for these men it would appear that some used *The Times* to make personal or family announcements. 29% announced their marriages, 10% announced births of new children and 24% announced deaths. The data also shows that 43% of the men worked in a professional or business environment, whilst a further 10% worked within a family business. The reason for these men's names to be given in this way is not clear. It could be that they were men who were coming out of their National Service, and were being commissioned into the RAuxAF, or that they were men leaving the RAFVR and being commissioned into the RAuxAF. The fact is the research has been unable to find a reason for their names to be gazetted in this way. However, when analysing the overall squadron results the 173 men with no squadron numbers given have been taken out of the figures to make the final results comparable with those before the war.

### **Analysis of the research**

#### **Table 23 - Royal Auxiliary Air Force Initial Data**

##### **Squadron Number**

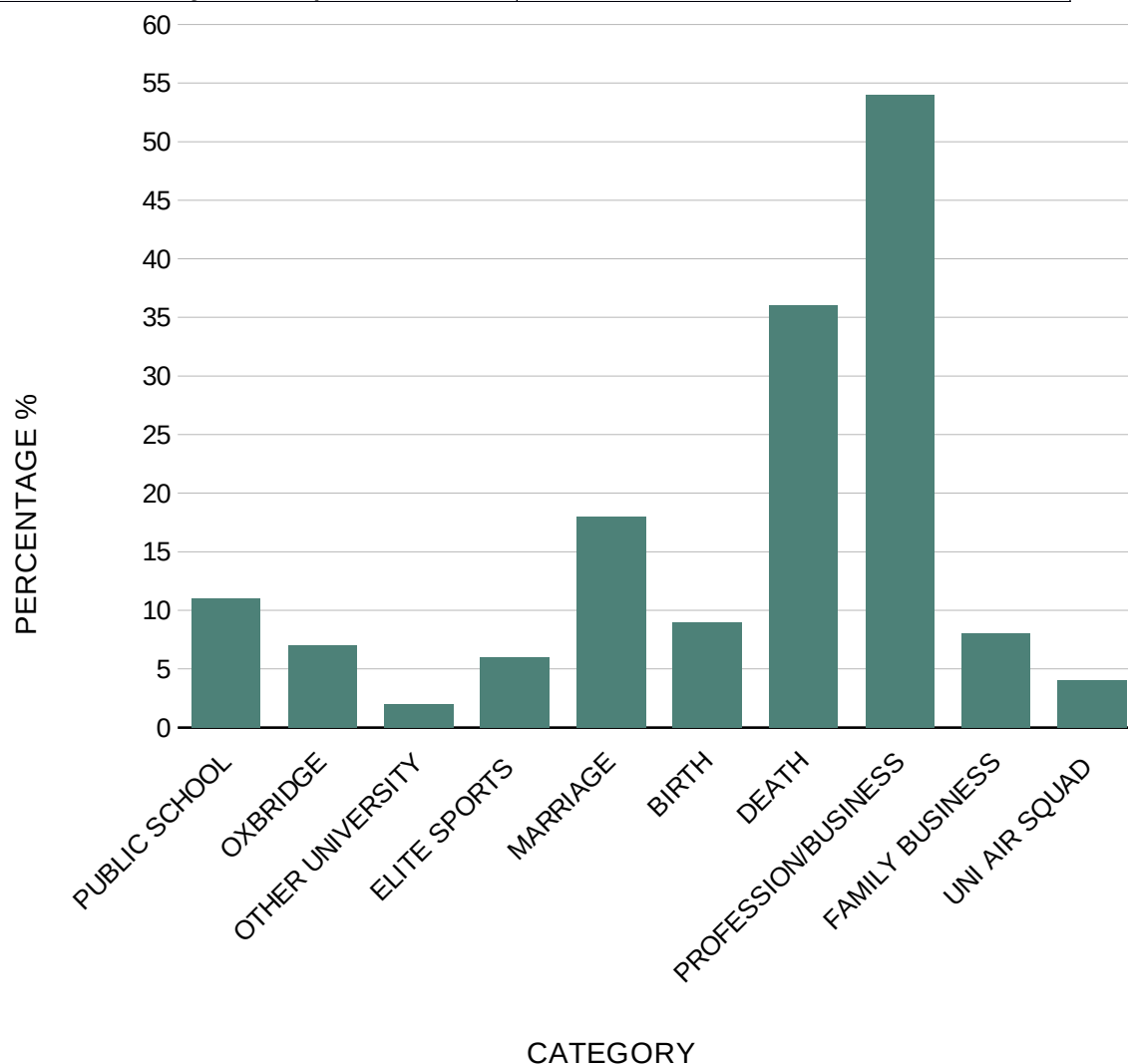
<u>Total of identified men</u>	<u>Total men with biographies</u>	<u>Percentage %</u>	
600	31	11	35%
601	40	16	40%
602	11	8	73%
603	44	13	30%
604	8	8	100%
605	40	13	33%
607	7	5	71%
608	31	19	61%
609	15	11	73%
610	5	4	80%
611	48	19	40%
612	1	1	100%
613	6	5	83%
614	2	1	50%
615	8	8	100%
616	7	4	57%
500	5	3	60%
501	28	13	46%
502	4	3	75%
504	2	2	100%
No Squadron Number Given	173	21	12%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>516</b>	<b>188</b>	<b>36%</b>

What can be drawn from the above table and the bar chart below is that the numbers for the post-war RAuxAF squadrons seem much lower than those of the pre-war AAF and this must be taken into account when analysing the data.

**Table 24 - Royal Auxiliary Air Force Data By Category**

<u>Category</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
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Public School	10%
Oxbridge	7%
Other University	2%
Elite Sports	6%
Marriage Announcement	15%
Birth Announcement	6%
Death Announcement	25%
Profession/Business	41%
Family Business	6%
University Air Squadron	4%



The data shows that in total 343 men were identified across all of the RAuxAF squadrons and of those 343 men biographies were found on 167 amounting to 49%. The research has been able to identify 592 men prior to the war and 343 men after

the war. This is a significant difference and perhaps shows a drop in the importance of *The Times* newspaper in sharing key events in a person's life, or perhaps suggests squadrons which are much more diverse in social make-up. The other point which must be considered is the fact that the actual squadron personnel research has produced much smaller numbers. This therefore can make the percentage figures seem much higher than the actual numbers. For example, in 612 Squadron, only 5 men were identified and biographies were found on three of them, this equates to 67% which appears to be a high percentage. The analysis must take this into account when drawing conclusions. When analysing the data for the northern squadrons as compared to the southern squadrons the picture is slightly different:

**Table 25 - Northern Squadrons showing percentage of men with biographies**

**Squadron Number**

	<b><u>Percentage of men with biographies</u></b>
602	73%
603	30%
607	71%
608	61%
609	73%
611	40%
612	100%
613	83%
616	57%
502	75%

**Table 26 - Southern Squadrons showing percentages of men with biographies**

<b><u>Squadron Number</u></b>	<b><u>Percentage</u></b>
600	35%
601	40%
604	100%
605	33%
610	80%
614	50%
615	100%
500	60%
501	46%
504	100%

Overall the northern squadrons have higher percentages for men with biographies as compared to the southern squadrons at first glance. However, it may well be the case that the southern squadrons have more men in each squadron which could buck the figures. There is also data prepared for a comparison of the English, Scottish, Welsh and Irish Squadrons which can be seen below:

**Table 27 - Comparison between English, Scottish, Irish and Welsh RAuxAF squadrons with biographical details**

<b><u>English Squadrons</u></b>	<b><u>Scottish Squadrons</u></b>	<b><u>Irish Squadrons</u></b>	<b><u>Welsh Squadrons</u></b>
600 (City of London) <b>35%</b>	602 (Glasgow) <b>73%</b>	502 (Ulster) <b>75%</b>	614 (Glamorgan) <b>50%</b>
601 (County of London) <b>40%</b>	603 (Edinburgh) <b>30%</b>		
604 (Middlesex) <b>100%</b>	612 (Aberdeen) <b>100%</b>		
605 (Warwick) <b>33%</b>			
607 (Durham) <b>71%</b>			
608 (North Riding) <b>61%</b>			
609 (West Riding) <b>73%</b>			
610 (Chester) Squadron			

<b>80%</b>			
611 (Lancashire) <b>40%</b>			
613 (Manchester) <b>83%</b>			
615 (Surrey) <b>100%</b>			
616 (South Yorkshire) <b>57%</b>			
500 (Kent) <b>60%</b>			
501 (Gloucester) <b>46%</b>			
504 (Nottingham) <b>100%</b>			

This also shows high overall percentages for those with biographies. However, once the percentages are broken down into individual categories, the size of the actual numbers can be seen:

**Table 28 - English RAuxAF Squadrons with biographical details by category**

Category

	<b>600</b>	<b>601</b>	<b>604</b>	<b>605</b>	<b>607</b>	<b>608</b>	<b>609</b>	<b>610</b>	<b>611</b>	<b>613</b>	<b>615</b>	<b>616</b>	<b>500</b>	<b>501</b>	<b>504</b>
<b>Public School</b>	0%	50%	13%	8%	25%	5%	0%	50%	5%	0%	13%	33%	0%	0%	0%
<b>Oxbridge</b>	9%	29%	0%	0%	25%	5%	0%	0%	5%	20%	13%	0%	0%	0%	0%
<b>Other University</b>	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	9%	25%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
<b>Elite Sport</b>	0%	29%	13%	0%	25%	0%	9%	0%	21%	0%	13%	0%	0%	0%	0%
<b>Marriage Announcement</b>	18%	29%	13%	15%	25%	5%	9%	0%	21%	20%	13%	33%	50%	8%	50%
<b>Birth Announcement</b>	27%	21%	13%	0%	25%	0%	18%	0%	5%	0%	0%	33%	0%	8%	0%
<b>Death Announcement</b>	45%	57%	50%	8%	50%	25%	9%	75%	32%	60%	63%	67%	0%	15%	50%
<b>Profession/ Business</b>	64%	79%	50%	62%	0%	68%	27%	75%	42%	60%	75%	33%	25%	92%	0%
<b>Family Business</b>	0%	7%	0%	0%	50%	16%	0%	0%	5%	0%	13%	33%	25%	0%	0%
<b>University Air Squadron</b>	9%	7%	0%	0%	0%	5%	9%	0%	5%	20%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

**Table 29 - Scottish RAuxAF Squadrons with biographical details by category**

<b>Category</b>	<b>602</b>	<b>603</b>	<b>612</b>
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<b>Public School</b>	0%	15%	0%
<b>Oxbridge</b>	0%	15%	0%
<b>Other University</b>	0%	8%	0%
<b>Elite Sport</b>	0%	0%	0%
<b>Marriage Announcement</b>	25%	15%	0%
<b>Birth Announcement</b>	0%	23%	0%
<b>Death Announcement</b>	63%	69%	0%
<b>Profession/Business</b>	63%	54%	0%
<b>Family Business</b>	0%	15%	0%
<b>University Air Squadron</b>	0%	15%	0%

**Table 30 - Irish RAuxAF Squadrons with biographical details by category**

### Category

	<b>502</b>
<b>Public School</b>	0%
<b>Oxbridge</b>	0%
<b>Other University</b>	0%
<b>Elite Sport</b>	0%
<b>Marriage Announcement</b>	0%
<b>Birth Announcement</b>	0%
<b>Death Announcement</b>	33%
<b>Profession/Business</b>	33%
<b>Family Business</b>	0%
<b>University Air Squadron</b>	0%

**Table 31 - Welsh RAuxAF Squadrons with biographical details by category**

<b>Category</b>	<b>614</b>
<b>Public School</b>	0%
<b>Oxbridge</b>	0%
<b>Other University</b>	0%
<b>Elite Sport</b>	0%
<b>Marriage Announcement</b>	0%
<b>Birth Announcement</b>	0%
<b>Death Announcement</b>	100%
<b>Profession/Business</b>	0%



<b>Family Business</b>	0%
<b>University Air Squadron</b>	0%

So for many of the squadrons, as discussed earlier, the shortage of data reduces many of the categories to zero. This can also be seen when the men with no squadron numbers actual figures by category are given.

**Table 32 - Royal Auxiliary Air Force data for men with no squadron number given by category**

<b>Category</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Public School</b>	0%
<b>Oxbridge</b>	0%
<b>Other University</b>	0%
<b>Elite Sport</b>	0%
<b>Marriage Announcement</b>	29%
<b>Birth Announcement</b>	10%
<b>Death Announcement</b>	24%
<b>Profession/Business</b>	43%
<b>Family Business</b>	10%
<b>University Air Squadron</b>	0%

The data for these officers who had no squadron number given in the *London Gazette* shows that there is no information at all about the education of these men in terms of whether or not they went to public school, and whether or not they attended any university. However, with regard to those men who used *The Times* to share with others key events in their lives, it can be seen that 29% of the men announced

their marriages, including Leonard Lee in April 1951, James Birkin in March 1956 and Anthony Barker. 10% of the men used *The Times* to announce the birth of their children, including Arthur Barnes in July 1948 and Paul Richey in November 1946. Finally 24% of the men's deaths were announced including Michael Taylor who died on 7<sup>th</sup> June 2008, Paul Richey in February 1989 and John Jupe on July 5<sup>th</sup> 1977. In terms of employment, 43% of the men worked within the professions or in business, for example T Appleton was appointed managing director of Balfour Kilpatrick Installations and Arthur Brearley who was director of post-experience programmes at the University of Bradford. Finally 10% of the men worked within family businesses, for example, William Evans who was self-employed in the family greengrocers business.

### **Case Study – 608 (North Riding) Squadron**

In July 1946 at Thornaby the new post-war 608 Squadron began to re-form, designated as a Mosquito light-bomber unit, but actually receiving the Mosquito NF (Night Fighter) 30 as part of Reserve Command 64 Group, with Squadron Leader William Appleby-Brown DFC as CO, and the Rt Hon Viscount Swinton continuing his appointment as Honorary Air Commodore.<sup>402</sup> On July 11<sup>th</sup> the *Northern Echo* reported that:

a flying start has been made by 608 Auxiliary Air Squadron at Thornaby with recruiting and training and with 12 officers and 44 airmen now enlisted, the squadron shows the highest returns for all Northern Command reserve Squadrons. At the same time it leads all Northern

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402

*The Times*, August 29<sup>th</sup> 1946, p4.

squadrons in the number of flying hours achieved since training began four months ago.<sup>403</sup>

Those who had flown with the Royal Air Force during the war could effectively be offered positions within the AAF as officers based on their technical skills and regardless of their background and social status. However, there was not a rush of recruits. Increased technical demands and a more rigorous selection process served to keep the numbers down. The recruitment process was much more carefully controlled and acceptance into the AAF took much longer than it had before the war when status equated to acceptance. Consequently, in conjunction with most of the other AAF squadrons, 608 struggled to recruit sufficient personnel to reach their establishment, in fact, by July 1947, it had only 12 officers and 44 airmen enlisted which amounted to 25% of the station establishment.<sup>404</sup>

The first post-war training camp for 608 Squadron began at Thornaby on August 8<sup>th</sup> 1947 and lasted for fourteen days. "Training included exercises over Germany and Holland and aircrews were flying Mosquitoes" reported one local newspaper. Local employers have given their full cooperation and the time spent at camp will be in addition to the customary summer holidays."<sup>405</sup> Other comments about the summer

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<sup>403</sup>

*Northern Echo*, 11<sup>th</sup> July 1947, p11.

<sup>404</sup>

TNA, AIR27/2676, 608 Squadron Operational Record Book, January 1947-December 1954.

<sup>405</sup>

*Northern Echo*, 8<sup>th</sup> August 1947.

camp mentioned “the happy camaraderie which animates all ranks.”<sup>406</sup> Again the men attended one night a week, and at weekends. Activities involved lectures, servicing the aeroplanes, working in the control tower, refuelling visiting aeroplanes, and of course, flying exercises. For all of these tasks the auxiliary men worked alongside their regular counterparts. In May 1948 the squadron converted to a day-fighter squadron using Spitfires and NA Harvard T26s. In December 1949, it was then re-equipped with Vampire jets and continued to fly this plane until 2<sup>nd</sup> February 1957. Local sporting events between the squadron and the local community, such as tug of war and football matches, along with squadron open days were meant to help build positive relationships between the squadron and the local community.

All of this came to an abrupt end in 1957 when the Government, took the decision to cut back on defence spending. It was decided, “the most effective deterrents for the United Kingdom were V Bombers and surface to air missiles”.<sup>407</sup> On 10<sup>th</sup> March 1957, along with twenty other RAuxAF Squadrons, Number 608 squadron was finally disbanded. On 1<sup>st</sup> October 1958 the airfield was closed to flying and placed on a care and maintenance basis, although the airfield continued to be used for a few months by Teesside’s 3608 Fighter Units Radar Control operations.<sup>408</sup> On Sunday 1<sup>st</sup> November 1958, in the presence of former officers and airmen, the Standard of No 608 (NR) Squadron Royal Auxiliary Air Force was presented to the 608 (NR)

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<sup>406</sup>

*North Eastern Weekly News*, 22<sup>nd</sup> August 1947.

<sup>407</sup>

David Brown, *Thornaby Aerodrome and Wartime Memories*, (Teesside,1992) p59.

<sup>408</sup>

TNA, AIR27/2712, 608 Squadron Operational Record Book, February 1955-March 1957.

Squadron Association by Air Vice Marshal G H Ambler, who in December 1934, had been the Commanding Officer of the Squadron. This took place at RAF Middleton St George at 3pm. On Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> November 1959, the Standard was laid-up in York Minster.<sup>409</sup>

Overall the research managed to identify 31 men as recruits to the squadron with 19 of them having biographies. This amounted to 61%. Of the men who joined the post-war 608 Squadron, the occupations of volunteers for officer posts were different from those of the pre-war officers. 42% of men worked for ICI undertaking a variety of skilled jobs including draughtsman (Jim Steedman), metallurgist (Harry Bates), analyst (George Joyce), and researcher (Grant Goodwill). All these jobs involved technical training and knowledge and reflected the higher emphasis that was being placed on skill and intelligence in English post-war society, as well as within military institutions. It also demonstrated the fact that technical knowledge did not necessarily have to be acquired through a traditional public-school and university education but could be learned through work experience or other forms of training. Other officer volunteers in the post-war 608 Squadron came from a wider range of occupational backgrounds: Bill Goodrum ran his own building business. Jim Marshall and Dave Stewart worked at Dorman Long, Bill Swainston was an engineer, Alan Clough worked for the Electricity Board and Hank Hancock worked for British Rail.

82% of the men now came from the large corporate industries such as ICI, and Dorman Long and this impacted on the relationships that existed between all ranks

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<sup>409</sup>

because many officers and lower ranks knew each other within their civilian jobs. Furthermore, only a small minority of officers, such as William Appleby-Brown, continued to work within family businesses.

58% of the post-war officers had served in the squadron prior to the war and were prepared to accept a substantial reduction in rank in order to re-join. This initial willingness to enlist in the AAF was reflected across the country and highlighted the wave of post-war patriotism that swept Britain. This can be seen in the case of Mr Winstanley who, having served in the regular RAF, joined 608 Squadron in 1946 and had to drop two ranks from Warrant Officer pilot in the regular RAF to Sergeant pilot in 608 Squadron. David Stewart also served with 608 Squadron between 1949 and 1952 and was an officer during his time in the RAF but had to re-join 608 Squadron as a Warrant Officer pilot flying Spitfires and Vampires. Other former RAF personnel, who wanted to join 608 Squadron, were prepared to drop rank in order to be accepted. A local reporter who met a sergeant pilot wearing the ribbon of the Distinguished Flying Cross (DFC) reinforced this point noting that this was an indication that he had dropped rank in order to re-join. John Pollock also served as a Sergeant in the RAF but dropped three ranks to be an Aircraftsman Second Class (AC2) when he joined 608 Squadron. Also, the CO, Squadron Leader W Appleby-Brown DFC, had dropped rank from a Wing Commander, in order to get back in.

However, of those veterans who had served in 608 Squadron during the 1930s and the war, 42% felt that they had “done their bit” and that they did not want to re-join the AAF after the war. Flying was no longer a novelty, it was no longer a sport, it was

an accepted symbol of modernity and therefore had in some ways lost its appeal. Whilst the initial level of interest was overwhelming, the actual number of men who met the criteria for enlisting was disappointing and reflected the new recruitment restrictions placed on all squadrons. Selection of officers, NCOs and airmen was now much more demanding, with particular emphasis on previous experience and knowledge. These demands were relaxed in 1948 to allow any ex-service-men to join the AAF in an effort to increase recruitment<sup>410</sup>. However, this action was too late to enable the AAF squadrons to benefit from the immediate post-war wave of enthusiasm which subsequently waned as men successfully re-adapted to civilian life. 37% of the ex-service men found it hard to adapt to civilian jobs and life and felt they lacked the interaction and teamwork that had characterised life in the RAF.

Furthermore, increased technical demands and a more rigorous selection process served to keep numbers down. The recruitment process was much more carefully controlled and acceptance into the AAF took much longer than it had before the war. Consequently, in conjunction with most of the other AAF squadrons, 608 Squadron struggled to recruit sufficient personnel to reach their establishment, in fact, by July 1947, it had only 12 officers and 44 airmen enlisted which amounted to 25% of the station establishment.<sup>411</sup> Another significant factor in slowing down recruitment was the conditions of service, which required the attendance for twelve weekends and fifteen days at annual camp, as well as the completion of one hundred hours of 'non-

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<sup>410</sup>

*North Eastern Daily Gazette*, March 15<sup>th</sup> 1948.

<sup>411</sup>

TNA, AIR27/2676, 608 Squadron Operational Record Book, January 1947-December 1954.

continuous' training. Many potential recruits could not meet this level of commitment. Aircrews were slightly different in that they were expected to put in one hundred and twenty five hours flying a year. Volunteers had to be prepared to commit to the conditions of service and therefore had to be willing to give up a significant amount of their free time in order to fulfil their obligations to the AAF.<sup>412</sup> Slow recruiting across the country prompted the Air Ministry to change the recruiting regulations in 1947, but the number of potential recruits slowed down considerably as many men felt that they had served their time during the war, had made the most of their opportunities to work with aircraft and satisfied their desire for travel. In a more expansive modern world, the opportunities that the AAF offered young men were not as appealing as they had been in the 1930s, because there were now new chances to travel or work in more challenging environments in civilian life.

Moreover, despite poor overall recruiting figures, there were significant numbers of pilots, around 73% across England, who had served in the AAF during the 1930s who were eager to continue flying, and wanted the opportunity to fly. Many were officers who had attained high ranks or had been decorated for their skill and bravery; others were NCOs who had been able to fly and enjoyed successful careers. Members from both groups were willing to re-join the AAF as soon as it was reformed, but these men were in the minority compared to the larger numbers of ex-RAF personnel. These national problems were also faced within 608 Squadron. All of the post-war recruits wanted to pursue their interest in aircraft and maintain the comradeship of the war. They were able to maintain their civilian jobs, receive a

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<sup>412</sup>

Wing Commander Jeff Jefford, 'Post-War RAF Reserves To 1960,' *Royal Air Force Reserve and Auxiliary Forces*, (Oxford, 2003) p89.



small second income as a member of the AAF and enjoy weekend camps and summer camps. 63% of men in 608 Squadron and other squadrons talked of it making their lives more enjoyable, enabling them to have some structure within their leisure time, fulfilling their interest in aircraft, and giving them a sense of pride in both country and local community.

Viscount Swinton remained as 608 Squadron's Honorary Air Commodore after the war and continued to be the only real link to the upper middle class backgrounds of the pre-war officers who had served within the squadron. Although the employment backgrounds of the officers were different, the backgrounds of post-war airmen remained similar to their pre-war contemporaries. All of the men interviewed felt that their employers in civilian life approved and actively encouraged them to join. Furthermore, all the veterans felt a strong sense of patriotism in the aftermath of the Second World War. Interviews with respondents reveal that reasons for joining the post-war AAF were wide and varied. Some volunteered for 608 Squadron after completing their national service. Others noted that following their demob from national service they volunteered for 608 Squadron because "the social side of squadron life was an attraction", while others volunteered to be able to fly. Some men felt that the transition from service life was difficult, to suddenly leave their friends, and then the adverts in the local press gave them the opportunity to become part of it all again.<sup>413</sup>

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413

For all the new openness in terms of recruitment, social activities within 608 Squadron after the Second World War continued to be based upon rank and position. The mess structure within the forces meant that officers had their own mess, which was often shared with the regular officers, as did sergeants whilst the airmen had the Navy Army Air Force Institute (NAAFI). This hierarchical structure meant that officers and men were still kept separate and this resulted in specific locations where each group of men would go to socialise. Even after the war, the officers kept to themselves. They did not mix with the NCOs unless there was a function in the Sergeants' mess that they were specifically invited to attend. Similarly the officers did not mix with the men, nor did the NCOs. Indeed the system of separate messes was standard RAF practice.

Social life within the squadron held a certain masculine appeal for both officers and airmen, although it is evident that the officers appeared to place a greater importance on social activities in the mess than the airmen. The officers functioned in a completely different way socially within the officers' mess and within the local public houses that they frequented. In the main they still continued to engage in public school boy antics in both social settings; however the mess games were a major part of weekend activities especially amongst the younger pilots, and it is clear that the older officers would retire to another room to enable the younger element to "let off steam".

All of the officers were clear about the lack of social mixing between themselves and the airmen, and most noted that separation of ranks was a normal part of military life.

However, it is apparent that during the two weeks annual camp, when the squadron travelled abroad for training, there was a much more relaxed relationship between the officers and the men and a greater likelihood of the two groups mixing. This was not seen as unacceptable because the camp was meant to be a combination of work and play where the rules of everyday life in the squadron were temporarily suspended. Class and rank were transcended during this period by a common sense of national identity in a foreign country.

In the end, the suggestion that AAF stations and personnel were not equipped to fly modern fighter planes was a common complaint voiced right across the country, and raised wider concerns about the efficiency of the AAF. Undoubtedly the technological advances that were being made in aircraft design meant that auxiliary squadrons sometimes struggled to maintain proficiency when compared to regular personnel. This factor prompted the government to analyse the competence of the part-time personnel, and it was these concerns that ultimately led to the winding down of the AAF in 1957.<sup>414</sup>

**Table 33 - Pre-War Versus Post-War Recruitment for Case Study Squadron**

<b>Squadron Number</b>	<b>Pre-War Identified Men</b>	<b>Post-War Identified Men</b>	<b>Pre-War Men With Biographies</b>	<b>Post-War Men With Biographies</b>
<b>608</b>	32	31	21	19

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<sup>414</sup>

Jefford, 'Post-War RAF Reserves To 1960' *Royal Air Force Reserve and Auxiliary Forces*, (Oxford, 2003) p89.

From the information above it is clear that there was only a tiny difference between pre-war and post-war identified men, and a small difference between those with biographies.

**Table 34 - Pre-War Versus Post-War Recruitment for Case Study Squadron By Category**

<b>Category</b>	<b>Pre-War 608 Squadron</b>	<b>Post-War 608 Squadron</b>
<b>Public School</b>	25%	5%
<b>Oxford or Cambridge</b>	45%	5%
<b>Other University</b>	0%	0%
<b>Elite Sport</b>	15%	0%
<b>Marriage Announcement</b>	35%	5%
<b>Birth Announcement</b>	0%	0%
<b>Death Announcement</b>	10%	25%
<b>Profession/ Business</b>	20%	68%
<b>Family Business</b>	55%	16%
<b>University Air Squadron</b>	15%	5%

The table above presents the data by category between the pre and the post-war squadron. For example, 25% of the pre-war squadron members had attended a public school compared to a very small 5% of the post-war members, including Hank Costain, Commanding Officer of the squadron from 1955. Similarly, 45% of the pre-war members had attended an Oxbridge university in comparison to 5% in the post-war, which included William Appleby-Brown, the CO and former pre-war member of the squadron. In terms of family or personal announcements, there was an increase from 10% prior to the war to 25% after the war of men who used death announcements. The main increase between the pre and the post-war world is the

increase in the number of men who are either professionals, or businessmen, with an increase from 15% to 68%.

### **The Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve**

Immediately after the end of the Second World War, many regular and part-time pilots were keen to enlist in the RAFVR, and were signed up for a period of five years. However, there were never enough pilots and consequently, focus was turned to the National Service men. Training to be awarded their wings took eighteen months, and in general, men were enlisted only for twelve months. For this reason, the Preliminary Flying Badge, which ensured that trainee pilots would be able to show their skills at a basic level, was introduced, and as time went on and the length of service for National Service men was increased to eighteen months, most pilots had reached a competent level. Furthermore, there were also VR women pilots who had a great deal of experience who would be able to demonstrate their proficiency at Preliminary Flying Badge and beyond.

The main area of shortage therefore fell with the airmen/ground crew, whose role it was to service, maintain and ensure that the aircraft remained in the air. A special recruiting campaign began to bring the RAFVR up to strength because of "the key position which the air defence units and fighter squadrons hold in the defence of our country."<sup>415</sup> In 1950 the extent of the need for recruits in the RAFVR was indicated by Mr A M Crawley, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Air, who declared that, 4000 volunteers were needed, specifically tradesmen were needed everywhere. The greatest need was for

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415

volunteers in the ground branches and trades, especially in maintenance, signals and radar, but there are some vacancies for flyers.<sup>416</sup>

By 1953, despite a major recruiting campaign throughout the country, there was still a shortfall of aircrew, from the 7600 needed there was an establishment of only 6000. Moreover, Tiger Moths had been replaced by Chipmunks, which meant that the more up to date training aircraft were being used, but, at the time, the RAuxAF and RAF squadrons were training on Vampire jets, consequently the training of pilots in the RAFVR was lagging behind compared to the rest of the RAF. Flying schools, whose role it was to train RAFVR pilots and aircrew, trained personnel at weekends and during the two week annual camp. Group Captain Peter Harris pointed out that:

From a military standpoint, the RAFVR did represent a pool from which individuals could be called up if the need arose, but the post-war auxiliary fighter squadrons were of more immediate use, being equipped with jets and trained to provide a highly skilled reserve for Fighter Command.<sup>417</sup>

#### **Table 35 - Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve Initial Data**

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416

*The Times*, May 13<sup>th</sup> 1950, p6.

417

Group Captain Peter Harris, 'Forty Years of Volunteer Service' *Royal Air Force Reserve and Auxiliary Forces*, (Oxford, 2003) p164.

<b>Number of Identified Men</b>	<b>Number of men with Biographies</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
4040	224	6%

*The London Gazette* identifies 4040 men who were commissioned into the Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve, and all of these names are listed in Appendix 2. However, cross referencing these individual names against The Times Digital Archive and individual squadron histories produced biographies for only 224, or 6% of the men. This is such a small number of identified men that it is hard to make assumptions based on the data. However, the table below shows the 224 officers with biographies by category.

**Table 36 - Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve data by category**

<b><u>Category</u></b>	<b><u>Total</u></b>	<b><u>Percentage</u></b>
Public School	14	6%
Oxbridge	19	8%
Other University	7	3%
Elite Sports	7	3%
Marriage Announcement	94	42%
Birth Announcement	15	7%
Death Announcement	102	46%
Profession/Business	70	31%
Family Business	3	1%
University Air Squadron	5%	2%

When the data in the table is analysed it is very difficult to come to conclusions about the kinds of backgrounds of these men on the basis of such a limited amount of information. However, of the 224 men with biographies, 46% of them had death announcements in *The Times* and a further 42% of them had their marriages announced. Finally 31% of them worked in business or in the professions. For

example, the marriage and death was announced for Richard Gordon, whereas the marriage was announced for Michael Martin and the death announced for John Emery.

The final part of this chapter will put forward a series of comparisons where the pre-war data is compared to the post-war data.

**Table 37 - Pre-war versus post-war recruiting of the Royal Auxiliary Air Force.**

<b>1926-1939</b>	<b>1926-1939</b>	<b>1946-1957</b>	<b>1946-1957</b>
Years	Number of Men	Years	Number of Men
1926	32	1946	71
1927	28	1947	66
1928	26	1948	30
1929	21	1949	30
1930	29	1950	65
1931	26	1951	36
1932	17	1952	52
1933	27	1953	84
1934	34	1954	19
1935	53	1955	21
1936	71	1956	17
1937	98	1957	0
1938	95	-	-
1939	32	-	-
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>561</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>491</b>

This table shows a year by year total for the actual number of men recruited to the pre-war AAF and the post-war RAuxAF according to the research data. This it must be remembered is based on the number of officers that were commissioned each year via the *London Gazette*. From the table it can be seen that between 1926 and



1934 there were a similar amount of men commissioned each year according to the data. The numbers of officers commissioned increased year on year until 1939 when war was declared and the AAF was merged into the RAF for the duration of the hostilities. With the post-war data it can be seen 1946 and 1947 showed a steady amount of recruits, when the RAuxAF was reconstituted in 1946. Perhaps the flush of enthusiasm after the war. The numbers then drop, but pick up again during the period of the Korean War between 1950 and 1953, with 1953 showing the highest number of recruits. After that there is a steady decline in the numbers until disbandment in 1957.

It must also be remembered that in the post-war, the RAuxAF was not only recruiting pilots, aircrew and ground crew, but was also recruiting for the Auxiliary Fighter control Units and the Royal Auxiliary Air Force Regiment, which is very likely to affect the number of recruits to the RAuxAF as a whole.

**Table 38 - Pre-war versus the post-war recruiting for the RAFVR year on year.**

<b>1937-1939</b>	<b>1937-1939</b>	<b>1946-1957</b>	<b>1946-1957</b>
<b>Years</b>	<b>Number of Men Recruited</b>	<b>Years</b>	<b>Number of Men Recruited</b>
1937	42	1946	5
1938	246	1947	498
1939	36	1948	819
-		1949	1229
-		1950	1229
-		1951	395
-		1952	233
-		1953	195
-		1954	49
-		1955	61
-		1956	46
-		1957	1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>324</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>4040</b>

From this data it can be seen that during the first year of recruitment, only a small number of men were commissioned. Bearing in mind of course that recruits to the RAFVR were recruited at the rank of sergeant before being commissioned once they were able to fly. 1938 is the best year for recruiting prior to the war with 246 men being commissioned. From 1939 onwards, all recruits into the RAF were trained through the RAFVR, so there is no data available for the war years. In the post-war world recruiting was very strong from 1947-1950 where the data shows 1229 men

being commissioned. From then the numbers fall continually until just one commission is found in 1957.

**Table 39 - Post-war Royal Auxiliary Air Force recruitment compared to the post-war recruitment for the RAFVR.**

<b>YEAR</b>	<b>RAuxAF</b>	<b>RAFVR</b>
	<b>Number of Men</b>	<b>Number of Men</b>
<b>1946</b>	71	5
<b>1947</b>	66	498
<b>1948</b>	30	819
<b>1949</b>	30	1229
<b>1950</b>	65	514
<b>1951</b>	36	395
<b>1952</b>	52	233
<b>1953</b>	84	195
<b>1954</b>	19	49
<b>1955</b>	21	61
<b>1956</b>	17	46
<b>1956</b>	0	1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>491</b>	<b>4040</b>

The data shows that the RAFVR was significantly better at attracting new recruits than the RAuxAF. The reason for this is not particularly clear, but is likely to be because of the constant issues surrounding the RAuxAF in terms of the likelihood of a part-time pilot being able to handle a jet aircraft with the few hours of training and flying that they had, as well as discussions around the bases that they operated from and their capability to land jet aircraft. These Air Ministry and Governmental concerns may well have impacted on recruitment, as well as the recruitment to the Fighter Control Units and the RAuxAF regiment.

**Table 40 - Pre-war AAF recruiting versus the post-war RAuxAF recruiting by  
squadron.**

<b><u>Squadron Number</u></b>	<b><u>Pre-War Recruiting - Number of Men</u></b>	<b><u>Post-War Recruiting - Number of Men</u></b>
<b>600</b>	70	31
<b>601</b>	72	40
<b>602</b>	41	11
<b>603</b>	45	44
<b>604</b>	39	8
<b>605</b>	52	40
<b>607</b>	25	7
<b>608</b>	32	31
<b>609</b>	22	15
<b>610</b>	17	5
<b>611</b>	18	48
<b>612</b>	20	1
<b>613</b>	5	6
<b>614</b>	19	2
<b>615</b>	16	8
<b>616</b>	8	7
<b>500</b>	27	5
<b>501</b>	17	28
<b>502</b>	17	4
<b>504</b>	22	2
<b>No Squadron Number Given</b>	0	173
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>592</b>	<b>516</b>

From this data it can be seen that squadron numbers 600-610 all show a lower recruitment figure per squadron after the war. 611 and 501 Squadrons do not fit this pattern, but the remainder do. Again a key question has to be how much the RAuxAF Fighter Control units and the RAuxAF Regiment took recruits away from the flying arm of the RAuxAF.

**Table 41 - Royal Auxiliary Air Force Data versus Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve Data by Category.**

<b><u>Category</u></b>	<b><u>RAuxAF</u></b>	<b><u>RAFVR</u></b>
Public School	11%	6%
Oxford or Cambridge	7%	8%
University	2%	3%
Elite Sports	6%	3%
Marriage Announcement	18%	42%
Birth Announcement	9%	7%
Death Announcement	36%	46%
Profession / Business	54%	31%
Family Business	8%	1%
University Air Squadron	4%	2%

The data in this table shows that the findings are not too different for each organisation, but again there are facts that must be taken into account before conclusions are drawn. Firstly, the reliability of the data for the RAFVR must be

questioned as so few of the commissioned officers had individual biographies and the data given only represents 6% of all the men who were commissioned between 1946 and 1957. Secondly, the post-war RAuxAF figures may well have been heavily affected by the creation of the other two part-time organisations, the Royal Auxiliary Air Force Fighter Control Units and the Royal Auxiliary Air Force Regiment. Therefore it has proved quite difficult to arrive at the more solid conclusions which have been drawn from the pre-war data.

## **Conclusion**

The data collected for the post-war world for both the RAuxAF and the RAFVR has proved much more difficult to analyse than that of the pre-war. This is largely because of the 173 men of the RAuxAF for whom no squadron number was given, and this number has had a major impact on the final results for the RAuxAF. Moreover, the high number of men's names which have been found for the RAFVR has also affected this data, and has therefore made it much more difficult to draw conclusions. However, what can be seen is that there is much poorer recruitment across the country in the post-war world compared to that of the pre-war. Is this because of post-war apathy, or is it because of the more difficult recruitment processes in the post-war world? What we can see is that both of the two key London squadrons, 600 (City of London) Squadron and 601 (County of London) Squadron have performed in exactly the same way as the case study squadron, 608 (North Riding) Squadron, and all of the other squadrons across the country, and that shows that much of the current historiography, which claims that the RAuxAF, were overrun with requests to join the post-war squadrons is in need of reconsideration.

Taking the data as a whole it can be seen that the most significant area of increase was in the profession category which for the RAuxAF increased from a pre-war figure of 24% to a post-war figure of 54%, whilst in the RAFVR the increase in the same category was from the pre-war figure of 14% to the post-war figure of 31%. Perhaps this shows the increasing need for qualifications in the more technical post-war world? The most obvious decline can be seen in the public school and Oxbridge categories which fell significantly in both the RAuxAF and the RAFVR recruits.

Significantly, the type of recruits to both organisations changed in the post-war world and this can be seen by the increased use of recruitment posters as a way of influencing young men's choices of how to spend their spare time. What is clear is the fact that after 1945 as prior to the war, the RAuxAF is not a gentleman's flying club, and nor is the RAFVR a citizen's air force.

## **Conclusion**

The Territorial Air Force (TAF) was created as the reserve contingent of the Royal Air Force (RAF). It was organised as two different sections – the Auxiliary Air Force/Special Reserve (AAF/SR) and the Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve (RAFVR). Both sections were made up of volunteers from different backgrounds and both are viewed in different ways by historians, the AAF being viewed as a “gentleman’s flying club” whilst the RAFVR as a “citizen’s air force.” This thesis has challenged the current historiography and presented original data to show that the accepted views of the AAF and the RAFVR are in need of review.

The thesis aimed to answer five research questions. In the first instance there was an analysis of the decisions taken by the government in a bid to discover why two different types of voluntary force, the AAF and the SR, were established. The evidence shows that this was an experiment to determine which type of force was more able to recruit men and would fit the requirements of the RAF. The winner of the experiment was the AAF; it was less expensive to run because it had significantly fewer regular men than the SR squadrons, morale was higher as each squadron was seen to belong to its members and recruitment was easier as there were fewer constraints on the volunteers. When the RAFVR was developed in 1936, the RAF reserves took on a different set up; the AAF was always made up of individual squadrons, whereas the RAFVR was not, and therein lies the problem when it comes to measuring data on the two separate parts of the reserve. Because men were recruited into the RAFVR, once trained they could be sent anywhere in the country to join a regular RAF station. This meant that data could not be shown in the



same way as for the AAF, where data could be collected squadron by squadron and then comparisons could be drawn. The numbers recruited to the RAFVR simply had to be shown as a list of names, and therefore the detail of the data found for the AAF, such as north and south, England, Ireland, Scotland and Wales and so on could not be analysed in the same way. As a result of which, the AAF is much easier to analyse and draw conclusions from than the RAFVR and a final comparison between the two different voluntary organisations is not really possible because the two organisations do not function in the same way.

The second research question related to evaluating the recruitment process for both parts of the TAF and using the data to compare the social composition of the two key London squadrons , 600 (City of London) Squadron and 601 (County of London) Squadron, upon which, the main assumptions about the AAF are built. Analysing the research data on these two squadrons and comparing it to the case study squadron, 608 (North Riding) Squadron, and the other eighteen squadrons across the entire United Kingdom produced a picture of recruitment and social class challenged previous assumptions. This new picture enabled the third research question relating to whether or not the AAF squadrons across the United Kingdom were different according to their region to be answered. Finally the thesis considered how the new squadrons integrated with their local communities and why these voluntary organisations were wound up in 1957.

The results of the research challenge existing academic thought because when looking at the pre-war data, 55% of the men identified as having been commissioned into an AAF Squadron had some sort of biographical information about them. Of the

two London squadrons, which form the basis for many of the images of AAF pilots, 49% of the men had some sort of biography and in the case study squadron, 63% of the men had some useful data. This compares to 79% of men identified for the RAFVR. Furthermore, when we look at the label given to the AAF of being a gentleman's flying club the data does not support this view with only 20% of the identified men attending public school and 19% of men attending an Oxbridge University. Comparing those figures to those of the RAFVR, labelled as a 'citizen's air force' it is clear that this view does not hold true either, with 39% of the identified men attending a public school and 54% of the men attending an Oxbridge University. Indeed, when all of the pre-war data is analysed, the RAFVR has a higher percentage for 7 out of the 9 categories. However, when the AAF squadrons are analysed squadron by squadron the image in the pre-war world is slightly different than the view across the whole organisation. On an individual squadron by squadron level, many of the squadrons do present an image of a gentleman's flying club particularly the squadrons in the south of England. Looking at the post-war figures a different picture emerges. 11% of the identified men for the Royal Auxiliary Air Force (RAuxAF) attended a public school compared to 6% of those identified for the RAFVR and 7% of the men in the RAuxAF attended an Oxbridge University compared to 8% of those men in the RAFVR. The most significant difference relates to announcements in *the Times* newspaper marking memorable events in a person's life with 18% of the RAuxAF men having a marriage announcement as compared to 42% of the RAFVR, and 36% of the RAuxAF men having a death announcement as compared to 46% of the men in the RAFVR.

Data which perhaps highlights changes in society can be seen when comparing the pre-war data with the post-war data for professions and family businesses. The pre-war figures show that 24% of the men identified in the AAF and 14% of the men in the RAFVR worked within the professions compared to the post-war figures of 54% of the men identified in the RAuxAF working within the professions and 31% of the men in the RAFVR. It can be argued that in some ways class can be defined by employment and in the post-war world there were more opportunities for people to move across and within social classes. Also the decline in primary and secondary sectors and the growth in the tertiary sector with a large increase in the number of people working in offices as compared to those working down the mines, in textile factories or ship building. Moreover, the growth in consumerism and the expansion of the holiday market and technological advances in transport all helped to shape a radically new society.<sup>418</sup>

However, the figures must be treated with caution because some problems have been identified. The post-war data shows that for the RAuxAF, 36% of the identified men had biographies whilst only 6% of the identified men for the RAFVR had biographies. This means that certainly the data for the RAFVR is so small that to draw conclusions with it would place us on shaky ground whereas the data of the RAuxAF is more reliable.

When the pre-war data is evaluated, certain images stand out, for example, the notoriety of 600 and 601 Squadrons members is apparent when the list of identified

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<sup>418</sup>

Edward Royle, *Modern Britain. A Social History 1750-1997*, (London,1987) p12.

officers for each of the two squadrons is studied. These men were significantly easier to research than some of the men from other AAF squadrons largely due to the fact that some of their names were well known. Clearly, this reflected their national status and although some other AAF officers across the country also used the paper to announce personal events, it was harder to find material relating to officers in other AAF squadrons and particularly difficult amongst northern squadrons. In this sense, 600 and 601 Squadrons were not typical of the wider movement but only in terms of public profile.

600 and 601 Squadrons recruited primarily from the City of London, with their officer candidates employed in the city's major institutions of banks, insurance companies, the Stock Exchange, legal firms and media organisations; their personnel had, in the main, been educated in public schools such as Eton, and many attended either Oxford or Cambridge. They had a general interest in politics with several following a career as an MP; many had connections to the aristocracy, most excelled at elite sports and invariably engaged in the kind of high jinks within the officers' mess that had characterised public school and university. They were all members of an elite lifestyle. However, analysis of 608 and other AAF squadrons revealed that this pattern repeated itself with surprising regularity right across the movement, but not in sufficient numbers to support the existing view.

These common patterns can be identified when the backgrounds of those from 600 and 601 Squadrons are compared with officer candidates from other southern squadrons, such as 604 (County of Middlesex) Squadron, 605 (County of Warwick) Squadron, 610 (County of Chester) Squadron, 615 (County of Surrey) Squadron,

500 (County of Kent) Squadron, 501 County of Gloucester) Squadron and 503 (County of Lincoln) squadron. Differences between them are certainly less significant than was initially predicted. That said, there were some minor but nonetheless interesting regional variations. For example, members of the southern squadrons which operated beyond the glamour of 600 and 601 Squadrons, included lawyers, stockbrokers and engineers, as well as post office engineers, building contractors and the sons of doctors, army officers and hatters. Thus, more modest middle-class backgrounds can be identified within these squadrons which are not as noticeable within 600 and 601. In this sense, Jeffrey Hill's argument that voluntary organisations have "the capacity to bring together a wide social mix"<sup>419</sup> holds true, in the sense that the AAF offered a meeting ground for young men from both traditional landed society and a wide spectrum of men from urban-industrial middle classes. However, Ross McKibbin's counter-argument that "social exclusion and political partisanship might be the chief function of many voluntary associations"<sup>420</sup> also applies in that the AAF offered its officers a sphere of authority and exclusivity that help distinguish them from those below them in the social order.

When we turn to the northern squadrons, such as 602 (City of Glasgow) Squadron, 603 (City of Edinburgh) Squadron, 607 (County of Durham) Squadron, 608 (North Riding) Squadron, 609 (West Riding of Yorkshire) Squadron, 611 (West Lancashire) Squadron, 612 (County of Aberdeen) Squadron, 613 (City of Manchester) Squadron, 616 (South Yorkshire) Squadron and 504 (County of Nottingham) Squadron,

<sup>419</sup>

Jeffrey Hill, *Sport, Leisure and Culture in Twentieth Century Britain*, (London, 2002), p131.

<sup>420</sup>

Ross McKibbin, *Classes and Cultures. England 1918-1951*, (Oxford,1998) p380. .

similarities between them and 600 and 601 are still noticeable in terms of links to the aristocracy, attendance at public school or Oxford and Cambridge Universities, and sporting prowess. However, there are significant differences with regard to the economic and social make-up of the officers. Although some of the young men worked within legal institutions or journalism, many worked within family businesses, including timber, shipping, textiles, glass, farming and mining.<sup>421</sup> The picture that ultimately emerges is of a new elite culture that developed during the nineteenth century between traditional landed classes and new bourgeois groups; it was forged through public schools, universities, clubs and print culture, and by the 1920s, the AAF offered a new focus for this elite culture, giving it a leadership role in key areas of national defence. Along with educational institutions and elite social clubs, the AAF played its own part in reinforcing this class identity and authority. The glamorous AAF squadrons in London represented a heightened version of this elite culture and whilst they were distinctive in many respects, they nonetheless shared many features with other AAF squadrons throughout the country, including 608 Squadron.

It is clear that AAF officers in the early twentieth century were men from prominent local and national families whereas after World War Two, recruiting procedures were significantly different resulting in social background playing a less important role in officer selection. Thus, pre-war recruitment was based on elite social networks and

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<sup>421</sup>

Frank H Ziegler, *The Story of 609 Squadron Under the White Rose*, (London, 1971.)

Aldon P Ferguson, *Beware Beware, The History of 611 (West Lancashire) Squadron*, (Reading, 2004.)

Ken Delve and Graham Pitchfork, *South Yorkshire's Own, The Story of 616 Squadron*, (Doncaster, 1990.)

word of mouth, whilst post war recruitment was based more on qualifications, skill and experience. Whilst many squadron histories believe that many men from the pre-war squadrons raced to join the reconstituted RAuxAF in 1946, the data does not really support that view with only 5 men rejoining 600 and 601 Squadrons, 1 rejoining 608 Squadron, and an overall total of 35 men overall rejoining the RAuxAF. This may be due to many having lost their desire to be part of a voluntary organisation and deciding that they had given enough time to serving their country during the war itself.

At the beginning of the research there was an assumption, based on the existing literature, that the findings would reveal that 600 and 601 Squadron were indeed very different from other English AAF squadrons, largely due to their elite membership. As the research progressed however, it became clear that in many areas this was simply not the case. There were indeed interesting regional differences which were largely based on economic structures; but the weight of evidence from 608 Squadron and indeed from all other AAF squadrons showed that there was a national common elite culture within the AAF created by universities and public schools, both of which played a major part in shaping a national elite in which the older landed classes and the new middling classes were melded. AAF squadrons played a significant role in sustaining the authority and social importance of these elites. This buttressing of elite culture was particularly important because it came during the early-to-mid twentieth century at a time when the young men forming the officer classes of the AAF were often losing their traditional authority and power in wider political, economic and cultural spheres.

There is no doubt that there were clearly defined social barriers to becoming an officer within any of the pre-World War II AAF squadrons. Technical qualifications and skills were never sufficient to warrant acceptance. This seems to have been the same across the country and there was no evidence of significant regional variations. What emerged was a picture that confirmed the elitist nature of the movement. Although 600 and 601 squadrons have always been the two most widely studied AAF squadrons, and their personnel and exploits have helped create a dominant image of the AAF, other lesser known squadrons were largely similar in their recruitment procedures and cultures.

Part of the voluntary military tradition that informed the creation of the AAF was based on the ideal of strong links between volunteer units and their localities. Research of national press records shows that "At Home" days were used by the RAF to create an interest in aerodromes across the country and to encourage local residents to support the different kinds of work undertaken by their men. The press played a key role in maintaining local interest in AAF squadrons and the status of the young officers was reflected in their social lives and activities regularly attracting media attention. In particular, AAF squadrons were meant to play a key role in creating positive attitudes towards the military as a whole.

However, evidence from 608 Squadron revealed significant tensions with its local community, including complaints from local inhabitants regarding the revolver and machine gun practice which took place on Sundays, as well as concern that the valuation of properties had been affected due to low flying planes. Local head teachers complained about intensive flying, whilst others found noise and annoyance



to be intolerable due to gun firing. The often strained relationship between 608 Squadron and its surrounding community was not helped by the elitist nature of the squadron and whilst it has not been possible to explore this issue in other AAF units, this class-community tension may have been a more common feature throughout the country than the voluntary ideal would suggest.

The fourth research question involved the importance of voluntarism within the TAF. The first question was the extent to which voluntary organisations retained their importance in a modernising society. Much of the existing historiography suggests that the voluntary traditions of the nineteenth century were declining steadily throughout the twentieth century due largely to the expansion of the state sector and the increase of large corporate businesses, coupled with social and cultural changes which led to a more home-centered lifestyle. The creation of the TAF and its subsequent re-forming in 1946 challenges this view by highlighting the importance of a voluntary organisation in the defense of the country, and presents the experiences of the many veterans who volunteered to join the service. The findings of the thesis also support the concept of the mixed economy, and the moving frontier model where the role of the state sometimes extends and sometimes retracts in relation to voluntarism, depending on specific circumstances.<sup>422</sup> Throughout this ebb and flow, voluntary institutions like the TAF continued to play an integral role in the social structure of the country.

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422

G Finlayson, 'A Moving Frontier – Voluntarism and the State in British Social Welfare,' *Twentieth Century British History*, Volume 1, Number 2 (1990), pp183-206.

Moreover, the question regarding how voluntarism intersected with class considered whether it was possible for a voluntary organisation to encompass a broad social mix of personnel. Although the TAF was a voluntary organisation, it remained throughout its existence a military structure which depended upon a rigid hierarchy in order to function effectively. This hierarchy ensured that a certain amount of class division was fundamental and supports the view of Ross McKibbin that social exclusion and political partisanship might be the chief functions of many voluntary associations. It is apparent from the research undertaken that class was a fundamental issue in terms of volunteers in both the pre-war AAF and the pre-war RAFVR with informal barriers in place to prevent entry to the officer ranks by those who lacked the appropriate social background, whilst class relationships in the post-war TAF were more fluid.

The TAF as a voluntary organisation operated during a period when successive governments placed considerable emphasis on the responsibility of individuals to play a significant role in the defense of the nation. In this climate, the TAF was able to draw officer volunteers from the aristocratic, gentry and bourgeois families in each of the regions across the country. In effect, the TAF offered those with the "right" backgrounds the arena in which to fulfill their enjoyment of flying whilst at the same time enabling them to play a leadership role within the local community, supporting the public school ethos of "doing their bit" and "setting an example for others to follow." When considering non-officer volunteers, however, there was a steady supply of recruits. Whilst these men encountered class divisions within the TAF and talked openly about the way they functioned on a day-to-day level, their motivations for joining the TAF and methods by which they were recruited were less shaped by class considerations; some sought training in a particular trade; some welcomed the

additional wages of a TAF member; most talked about a desire to serve their country. The class divisions encountered once they joined their squadrons were accepted as a fact of life.

Furthermore, the question was also raised as to how rooted voluntary organisations like the TAF were in their local communities. The voluntary military tradition that shaped the TAF was based on the principle of a citizen army formed from local people operating in their local context, and the relationship between AAF squadrons and their surrounding communities was a key issue explored in the thesis. Because military voluntarism of this kind was rooted in regional and local contexts, the TAF was expected to strengthen bonds between local businesses, large corporations and local communities. However the study suggested that in particular, AAF recruitment policies in the 1930s restricted recruitment of officers largely by class, and in the post-war era, by experience and technical knowledge. Recruitment of other personnel was more broadly based but the organisation never recruited what can be described as a significant cross-section of local society. The social life of officers and men rarely engaged with the wider social life of the community and despite regular open days in which the local AAF squadron encouraged members of the public to explore its facilities, the recurring flashpoints that took place specifically between the case study squadron, 608 Squadron and its surrounding community testify to an often troubled relationship, particularly in the inter-war period.

It is clear that the AAF did change throughout its existence between 1926 and 1957. Most noticeably there was a more democratic and technocratic spirit at work after World War II, specifically in terms of recruitment procedures and officer-airmen

relationships on summer camps. The social exclusivity of the AAF which had existed during the interwar years did not continue after the Second World War to the same extent, although there were still divides between officers and airmen, as well as between NCOs and airmen, but these were now essentially based on the hierarchical nature of military life rather than on wider class structures and relations. Prerequisites were put in place to ensure that technical knowledge and qualifications were necessary to acquire rank and status within the new organization. Word of mouth amongst elite social cliques was no longer enough to guarantee membership. Furthermore, although men were prepared to drop rank in order to re-enlist, their middle class backgrounds were no longer sufficient to guarantee a leadership role.<sup>423</sup> In the post war world, the idea of the AAF as a club seemed to lose its previous cachet since young men now had more opportunities to fill their leisure time. After a brief upsurge of patriotism immediately after the war, patriotic ideals lost some of their previous appeal and thus the ideas of the "volunteer fighters" which had been so important in the early 1930s were no longer as attractive.

This local case study of 608 (North Riding) Squadron based primarily at Thornaby Aerodrome between 1930 and 1957 is inevitably restricted in its scope, but it has helped to map out some wider potential conclusions about the AAF as a whole. It has helped support the view that there were only minor differences between the activities of the officers within 608 as compared to those in 600 and 601 Squadrons or indeed any other AAF squadron. Whilst many of the officer candidates in 608 did

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<sup>423</sup>

Tom Moulson, *The Flying Sword. The Story of 601 Squadron*. (London, 1964).

not have the social status and family backgrounds of officers in 600 and 601 Squadrons, they still were well-known local families who had a certain degree of status within the Teesside area and subscribed to a recognisably national elite lifestyle. Many had similar backgrounds to the 600 and 601 Squadron officers in that they had been to public schools, universities and were wealthy enough to own their own planes. All engaged in the typical activities that went on in the officers' mess and this was clearly a ritual form of behaviour that was replicated throughout the AAF squadrons in England throughout the 1930-1957 period.

The findings of this research show that looking at individual squadrons, the perception of the AAF which has been put forward by historians and which has been generally accepted throughout the history of the organisation is largely correct in the period up to 1939. Thus, the pre-war data shows that right across the country, the AAF clearly was a "gentleman's flying club" made up of English social elites, and the experiences of 600 and 601 Squadron were very similar to other AAF squadrons in terms of the types of young men who joined the organisation, the selection process which controlled entry and the social life of a typical officers' mess. There are some relatively minor regional differences, primarily based upon employment patterns, but these pale into insignificance in the face of a hegemonic elite culture that prevailed right across the AAF movement.

The reformed AAF between 1946 and 1957 was no longer an exclusive club made up of rich young officers. Instead it was an organisation composed of men who had the technical ability and skills to fly the modern jet fighter aircraft and who had earned their rank and status by virtue of past education and experience. Those who

reformed the organisation had learned that whilst those chosen to be officers in the pre-war AAF were very capable and performed their jobs well, the kind of men needed in the post-war required new technical knowledge and qualifications.

This thesis has demonstrated that the pre-war RAFVR as a whole did not play the role of a citizen's air force, with a high percentage of volunteers attending public schools across the country and Oxbridge universities, and having key events in their lives marked by announcements in *the Times* newspaper. This shows that in many ways the RAFVR recruited and operated in the same way as the individual squadrons of the AAF. This is clearly not the case when the post-war data is considered. There is little doubt that there is limited research covering the reserve forces of the RAF, and this piece of research has found data which challenges the established historiography and view of the reserves. The term used by the government to describe the RAFVR, the "citizen's air force," has been challenged by this new data and has been shown to be open to question, given the backgrounds of those men who were commissioned into it. Similarly, the exclusive nature of the RAuxAF has been reinforced by the research which has provided data on the backgrounds of the officer recruits across the entire United Kingdom.

This shows that the prevailing thesis of the pre-war AAF being a gentleman's flying club is not supported by the data across the whole of the United Kingdom. Even the data found on the two London squadrons, 600 and 601 Squadrons do not support the view of the AAF as an exclusive club. This result also holds true across the case study squadron. In terms of the RAFVR being a citizen's flying club, the data found does not support that view either showing that overall, larger numbers of men who

joined the RAFVR came from better backgrounds than those who joined the AAF. Consequently, the thesis has highlighted differences in the composition of the reserves across the country which the existing historiography does not mention.

In terms of the post-war data, again the data shows that the men recruited to the RAuxAF were from less exclusive backgrounds than their pre-war counterparts. This view is mirrored across the whole country and is supported by the data for both the key London squadrons and the case study squadron. The data also shows that the recruits to the RAFVR are also from less exclusive backgrounds compared to the men recruited prior to the Second World War.

However, it is clear that the post-war data is much poorer than the data from before the war. In particular when the RAFVR figures are considered there is such a poor number of men with biographical details that it is incredibly difficult to draw effective conclusions. Similarly, the data for the RAuxAF shows smaller numbers of recruits to most of the squadrons, and there is an anomaly in terms of 173 men who were recruited to the organisation but were not allocated to any particular squadron. Again this has thrown the figures out and has meant that the conclusions drawn from the post-war data across the reserves as a whole are less reliable.

In this respect, the research has shown that the old adage, well-known in RAF circles, written by an anonymous RAF writer prior to the Second World War, is no longer true:

There are three kinds of Air Force Officer....

The Regular, who is an Officer trying to become a Gentleman.

The Auxiliary, who is a Gentleman attempting to become an Officer.

And there is the VR, who is neither, trying to become both.<sup>424</sup>

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